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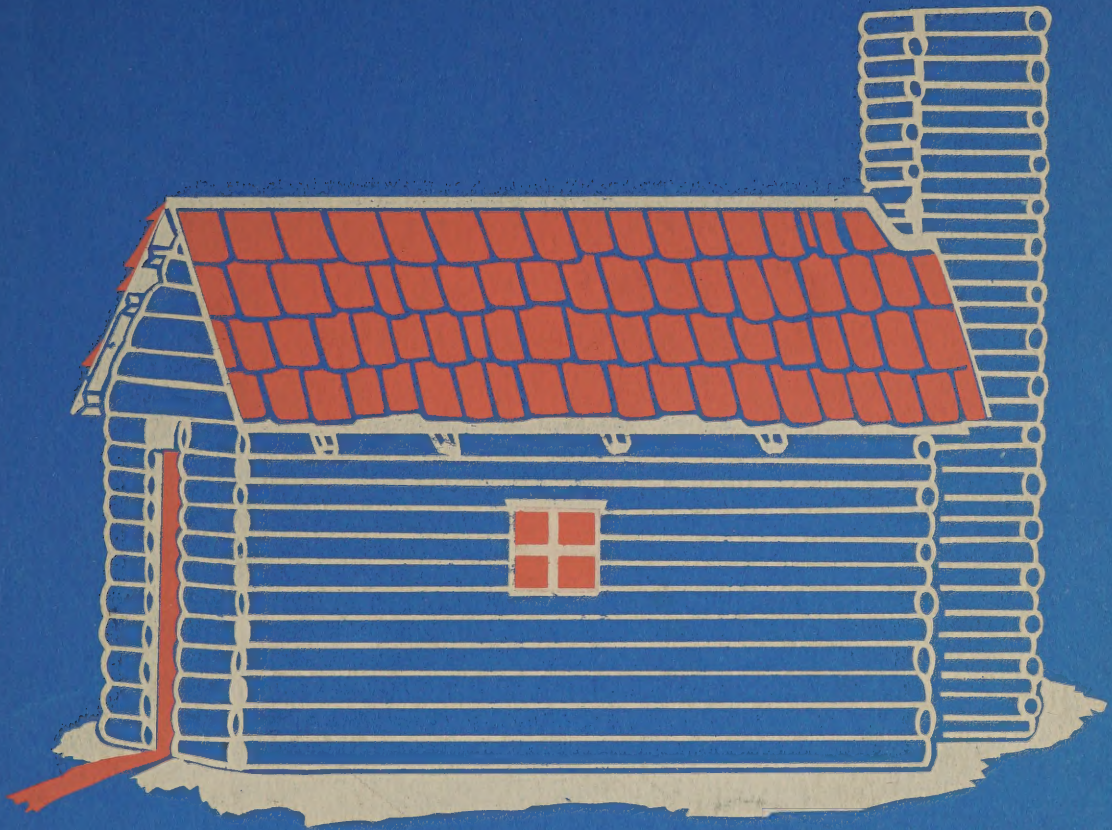








# LEE COUNTY HISTORY



THE GALLAND SCHOOL

*Iowa Writers Program W.P.A.*



COVER DESIGNED & PROCESSED BY IOWA ART PROGRAM, W.P.A.



LEE COUNTY HISTORY

IOWA

W.P.A.

Compiled and written by  
The Iowa Writers' Program  
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In the State of Iowa

Jessie M. Parker,  
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## FOREWORD

In these days when the democratic way of life is threatened, it is timely to emphasize our American Traditions with a new history of our county.

Events important in both National and State history are woven into Lee County's background. The oldest land title in the State is recorded of an early-day apple orchard where Indians traded, and the first school in the Iowa country was located on the Lee County shore of the Mississippi. Fourteen miles of Lee's shore are sacred ground in the annals of Indian warfare, for within those limits the decision was made that culminated in the Black Hawk War. The only allotment in the United States of a home for the people of mixed Indian and white blood was the Half-Breed Tract in Lee County.

The War of Rebellion brought to Lee County its "Little Arlington", the only National Cemetery in Iowa. Every form of waterway transportation touched the levees of the "City-at-the-Point", the "Gateway" to the Northwest. These, and various other phases of the past of Lee County, belong to the historical knowledge we wish our school children to have. The Iowa Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration has given us a Lee County History that presents a true picture of its development.



County Superintendent of Schools,  
Lee County





## INTRODUCTION

### THE BEGINNINGS OF LEE COUNTY

Lee County lies at the extreme southeastern corner of the State. Water forms more than three-fourths of Lee's boundaries. The Skunk River marks its border on the north, Van Buren County on the west, the Des Moines River separates it from Missouri on the south, and on the east the mighty Mississippi flows between Iowa and Illinois.

Geologically Lee County was the starting point for the classification of the great series of carboniferous limestone throughout the entire Mississippi basin. Here the rocks were first defined and described according to modern scientific methods. In addition to the rich resources of limestone, Lee has a little coal, which is stripmined. Throughout the county's 520 square miles fertile soil for farming abounds, although its hills are so numerous that Lee is one of the most scenic counties in Iowa.

That the mound builders were the first people to inhabit Lee County is proved by the series of mounds bordering the rim of the basin known as Green Bay Bottoms. These mounds are oval in shape, two to nine feet in height, from 15 to 32 feet in diameter and from 30 to 50 feet in length. Various relics taken from this group consisted of polished and unpolished stone axes, flints, arrowheads, pieces of pottery, and portions of human and animal skeletons. In addition to these were remarkable collections of fossils and minerals, including 2,500 of the finest crinoids.

The Indians, who perhaps came centuries after the mound builders, were the Sac and Fox tribes of the Algonquin family. The Sacs had lived around Montreal, Canada, where they had traded with the French. When the British overcame the French, the Sacs were forced to Green Bay where they formed an alliance with the Fox.

Our first record of a white man's arrival in Lee County is of 1673, when Father Marquette found Indians here, visited with them on the banks of the Des Moines River, raised a cross, and addressed the Red men regarding the Catholic faith. Father Marquette passed on, making no settlement in the Iowa Territory, but confining his work to exploration. A party of French, under Father Hennepin (a Franciscan friar sent out by the famous explorer La Salle) followed the shores of the Mississippi River touching Lee County in 1680, and no doubt paddled up the Des Moines River for some distance.





## The Beginnings of Lee County

Lee County was originally a part of the Louisiana Purchase of the United States from the French Government in 1803. Thirty years later it was included in the Black Hawk Purchase.

In 1805 Gen. James Wilkinson, commander of the Military Department of the Southwest, dispatched Lt. Zebulon M. Pike and 30 men by keelboat up the Mississippi River to select a site for a military post somewhere between St. Louis and Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. Lieutenant Pike made several stops along the shores, holding friendly councils with the Indians in an effort to pave the way for future trade relations. The location he recommended was a high but comparatively level bluff, 40 miles above the rapids of the Des Moines, now Crapo Park at Burlington.

When Lt. Alpha Kingsley and a company of the First United States Infantry were detailed for the actual construction of the fort three years later, they landed, either by chance or miscalculation, at a point only ten miles above the rapids, 30 miles from Pike's chosen site, and camped beside a spring of good water. Lieutenant Kingsley decided to build the fort at this place which he called "Belle Vue" because of its commanding outlook over the river, and reported to his superiors that no site would be found more healthy, or more advantageous for Indian trade. Enthusiastic over his discovery, he completely overlooked the military disadvantages -- the ravines which would afford protection for lurking Indians and the bluffs from which attacks could be launched on the fort below.

When the Indians of the region saw the smoke of camp fires and heard the ring of axes biting into wood, they were much disturbed. According to a treaty negotiated with the Sac and Fox by Gov. William Henry Harrison at St. Louis in 1804, the Red men had ceded millions of acres in Missouri, Illinois, and Wisconsin to the United States, and in return were granted the cancellation of debts incurred for clothing and supplies. Therefore when Kingsley and his men landed from their boats in September 1808, and began cutting the timber to build a settlement of cabins, their action was a shock to the Indians, who regarded them as usurpers.

Fearing stealthy attacks by vengeful natives, they kept their weapons close beside them while they set about erecting log fortifications. Warned by British traders who resented American competition in the Mississippi Valley, and stirred by subtle propaganda, Chief Black Hawk and his Sac and Fox tribesmen watched unhappily and complained, as Black Hawk noted in his Autobiography, "The whole party acted as they would in an enemy's country." The Indians requested the soldiers to quit their construction work and go down the river again.





## The Beginnings of Lee County

Naturally Kingsley refused, but tried to show his peaceful intentions by hurrying to open a store and allowing the Indians to take goods on credit, which could be paid for in the spring from the proceeds of their fall and winter hunting season. The trading house, known as Le Moine factory and operated by Col. John W. Johnson, started business with merchandise valued at \$14,715.99. On March 28, 1809, Colonel Johnson reported that he had on hand 710 pounds of beaver, valued at \$2 per pound; 1,353 muskrat skins, valued at 25 cents each; a bundle of shaved deerskins -- 25,021 pounds, amounting altogether to \$6,255.25; 3,000 deerskins "in the hair," valued at \$601.20; 20 first quality bearskins, worth \$30; 44 second quality bearskins \$44; 176 otterskins, at \$2; 100 pounds of beeswax, at 20 cents per pound; and 968 pounds of tallow, at 12½ cents per pound.

Kingsley was careful to locate Le Moine factory outside the stockade, so that the Indians would have no excuse for requesting entrance into the fort proper. But the Red men saw through the strategy, and spent the winter scheming to circumvent it. They pretended great friendliness to the garrison, even offering to dance before the assembled soldiers inside the fort.

While the men were relaxed and off guard, the Indians planned to fall upon them suddenly and massacre them with weapons concealed beneath their robes and blankets. Whether the ruse really would have succeeded no one knows, for it was betrayed to the garrison by a friendly Indian, some authorities say by a young woman who was in love with Lieutenant Kingsley.

All winter long the soldiers had been cutting and hauling stout oak logs. In the early spring they rushed to complete the buildings and surround them with a five-sided stockade of 12 by 18-inch white oak pickets, to stand nearly 15 feet high. Two of the three blockhouses commanded corners at the points of the inclosure nearest the river. The garrison moved in on April 14, 1809, and Lieutenant Kingsley named the post Fort Madison in honor of the recently inaugurated President of the United States.

Kingsley wrote the War Department on April 19, 1809, regarding his warning of the massacre the Indians had planned: "Upon receiving this information (his warning) I made every possible exertion to erect blockhouses and plant my pickets; this we did in two weeks (lying on our arms during the night) and took quarters in the new fort on the 14th inst. Being tolerably secure against an attack, we have been able to get a little rest, and are now making preparations for the safety and defense of this establishment."





## The Beginnings of Lee County

One day in May 1809 the Indians returned and made a great show of settling their trading accounts with the rich pelts they had obtained in hunting. In order to celebrate the occasion, Chief Fashepaho asked permission for his warriors to dance before the white men at the fort. The Indians gathered around Black Hawk in front of the entrance to the stockade and some of them began to sway in dancing rhythm as the gate swung open. Squarely in the aperture stood a six-pound cannon, and even while the plotters fell back astounded, a soldier ran out with a lighted flare, to set it off. Other armed men rushed out of the garrison, and the startled Indians hastily retreated to their camp. Chief Fashepaho got a stern reprimand from Lieutenant Kingsley, and the plotters soon quit the vicinity. Afterwards Fashepaho was permitted to proceed unmolested with the others to Rock Island.

Captain Horatio Stark, transferred north from Fort Adams, Mississippi, took command of Fort Madison August 24, 1809, relieving Lieutenant Kingsley. At that time the garrison consisted of 81 officers and men with seven additional persons in the factory department -- an average maintained during the following three years of comparative quiet.

With the approach of the War of 1812 the Indians, incited by the British soldiers and traders who hoped to monopolize the northern Mississippi region, again publicly demonstrated their hostility. Only Fort Madison remained as a bulwark on the west of the Mississippi between the "enemy" and St. Louis, and the United States Government was then considering abandoning this outpost fort.

Lieutenant Thomas Hamilton, who succeeded Captain Stark as commanding officer in September 1812, faced a tense situation. The surrounding Indians' smouldering hatred flared to the point of an attack on September 5, when a prospective settler named Graham ventured ashore from the Mississippi and sought sanctuary in the fort. Two hundred Winnebagoes flung themselves against the stockade, but made no progress and killed only one man, Private John Cox, whom they caught outside the barrier. He was murdered and his scalp swung from an Indian belt.

The next morning the Indians burned Graham's boat and two belonging to the fort, destroyed grain and livestock, and attempted to fire the fort itself by shooting flaming arrows into the roofs and by throwing lighted timbers down from the surrounding bluffs. Several blazes were started but quickly put out with water shot by the soldiers from syringes contrived from their long gunbarrels. It was tragically evident, though, that the ravines and bluffs, natural allies of the Indians, were a deadly handicap to the garrison.



The factory or store still stood unmolested, but fearing that it might be set on fire and that the blaze would spread over to the stockade, Lieutenant Hamilton watched until the wind shifted to the opposite direction, then detailed a soldier to touch a firebrand to the store. It burned with all its contents, but its destruction removed a threat of fire for the interior fortification. A subsequent letter from Colonel Johnson to General Mason, Superintendent of Indian Trade, set an estimate of \$5,000 on the loss -- \$5,330 in building material and labor, 60 packs of peltries, worth \$30 per pack, \$1,800, 120 bearskins, \$120, and miscellaneous articles to the value of \$250.

The Indians lurked as a menace through many months of surface calm, and in the summer of 1813 laid active siege to Fort Madison. Vivid details of this period and the final chapter of the fort's history were jotted in the diary of Corporal Harding, a record kept at the request of his sweetheart back in Pennsylvania. Excerpts from the period covering July 6 through September 5, 1813, offer a vivid picture.

"July 8. -- The Indians are growing restless, and most dreaded news -- that Black Hawk, the warrior chief, has joined forces with the English. Keokuk still remains friendly, and leads a considerable faction, but he has never had the following of war-tried men that Black Hawk has. It is very ominous for us....

"July 9. -- We have had trouble yesterday, and are greatly alarmed. Two of our soldiers had gone for water down at the spring, when they were suddenly shot from ambush. The men were among our best soldiers, and our hearts were very heavy. It seems to me that this fort is built in the wrong place. I believe that the idea of Belle Vue (the original name), haunted the builders rather than its present name, Fort Madison. The spring is close to the river, and is surrounded with gullies and ravines, where the Indians can ambush and prevent us from obtaining water....

"July 14. -- All our work gone for nothing. Corporal Smith and two privates were detailed to guard the blockhouse by the spring. Whether they were careless, we will never know, but they were outside in the moonlight, smoking..... The Indians suddenly sprang on them and the men tried to regain the blockhouse. One wily savage thrust his spear in the opening, before they could shut the door, they forced the door wide open, and in ten minutes the three were dead -- worse than dead.

"July 18. -- Our food is low and our ammunition worse. We dare not shoot game for fear of wasting our bullets, and our diet is restricted in consequence. Lieut. Hamilton





## The Beginnings of Lee County

wrote to St. Louis today, asking for 50 pounds of musket powder... and protested vigorously against the useless waste of his brave men in such a place...

"July 21. -- We have been busy strengthening our defense.

"August 20. -- The calm has lasted long. We dare not lay down our arms, and yet for almost a month, we have heard nothing of the savages. No message has come from St. Louis, and we are undecided whether our messenger reached there. I am sure we will have trouble soon.

"August 28. -- We are desperate. The savages are attacking in a systematic, regular siege. Where is our aid from St. Louis?

"August 31. -- I have not slept for two nights. The warwhoop sounds constantly and we are on our feet night and day. The Indians have become very expert and shoot through the loopholes. Our provisions are very low, our ammunition almost exhausted. Aid must come quickly, or we will have to abandon this spot we fought so hard to keep.

"September 1. -- The die is cast. As soon as a trench can be dug, we will leave this fort and go down the river. Our boats have been safely guarded, and now we will have to use them. Only a handful of corn meal to today's food. Our garrison is much reduced, and we have but 30 able-bodied men.

"September 2. -- Lieut. Hamilton was wounded today, and now I am responsible for the carrying out of our plans. We work all the time, and the trench is near completion. Only 25 men can work and they must take turns guarding the block-house.

"September 3. -- Tonight we shall leave this place -- this Belle Vue, which has been the grave of so many brave men.

"September 5. -- Afloat on the broad river -- bound for St. Louis -- beaten and defeated. Shall I tell you how we left? As soon as it was dark, on the night of September 3, the men carried the wounded through the trench to the open flatboats, which were all we had. Then they all embarked and I waited to fire the forts -- we dared not leave them for the foe. When the last man was safely on the boats, I took the torch and set fire to the building and left sadly and humbly. Yet my blood was fired with the weirdness of it all. The flames licking the homes of the brave frontier guard, the silent trees wailing a requiem, the river lapping a sorrow-song, and the warwhoop sounding wildly in the dark, echoed from shore to shore. We were going, but we will come





## The Beginnings of Lee County

again. Civilization beaten back for a second, will yet pulse onward victorious, and woe betide the one who stands in its path! The Indians did not discover our escape until we were out on the river and the flames showed them the truth. We could see them rushing into the burning building, but there was little to tempt them. Once I heard Black Hawk's voice, which once heard is always remembered, 'Come out, my warriors. This is Po-To-Wo-Nok place of fire..' To the Indian it may be, for it is forever the place where his race desires are sealed. To us it is Fort Madison, the frontier advance of that wave, which cannot be repelled."

Less than a generation later, in 1834, Des Moines and Dubuque counties were established, embracing what was later Lee and several other Iowa counties. In 1835, when Lee County was still part of the Wisconsin Territory, Lt. Albert M. Lea, leading a party of dragoons through the Iowa country, wrote a glowing account of his explorations and observations and of making the first survey of the Des Moines Rapids. Lieutenant Lea slept in the same room where Starr drew up the bill naming Lee County, and wrote that "in consideration of my having mapped, described, and named the area now known as Iowa and Minnesota," the "Lea" name was put down for the first county, Lee. His account continues, "It is easy to see how the transcribing clerks changed the spelling, as my mode of spelling with the final "a" was unusual; and as I disappeared mainly from that theater and Captain Lee (Robert E.) had come upon it, the name naturally was attributed to him."

On December 7, 1836, Des Moines County was subdivided into six separate districts, one of which was named Lee County, but with indefinite boundaries. These lines were later re-established by the Iowa Territorial Legislature, in an act approved January 23, 1839.



## CHAPTER 1

### THE TESSON APPLE ORCHARD

When the first settlers began to move into southeastern Iowa in the early thirties of the nineteenth century they were amazed to find in the primeval forests skirting the banks of the Mississippi River an old apple orchard. The trees had already reached maturity and many of them had fallen into decay: some had been toppled over by storms, and second growth saplings were springing up about their roots.

Who had planted the apple trees? Surely not the Indians. Evidently some white men, years before, when they had sought to found a permanent home in the wilderness; had planted these trees, but had failed to establish themselves.

This ownership of Iowa land was hazarded by Louis Honore Tesson, the son of a French Canadian tailor who lived in St. Louis. He voyaged up and down the Mississippi, traded with the Indians, and finally laid claim to a beautiful level terrace of second bottom land, fertile and picturesque. A high prominence at the rear afforded a magnificent view of the river for miles in either direction, while below was an excellent landing for boats. Lying about midway between the Spanish mines (Dubuque) and the seat of government at St. Louis, the place gave abundant promise for trading for there was a large Sac village on the Iowa side at the head of the rapids. Moreover, the position at the head of the rapids was strategic as the beginning or end of a long portage.

Tesson approached the Spanish Government and his proposal to establish a trading post was favorably received. On March 30, 1799, he received permission from Zenon Trudeau, Lieutenant Governor of the province of upper Louisiana, to make a settlement upon 7,056 arpents of land. The privilege was conditioned on Tesson's using his influence to bring the Indians under subjection of Spain. He was also to plant trees and sow seeds, to instruct the Indians in the art of agriculture, and to spread the tenets of the Catholic faith.

Purchasing supplies in St. Louis, largely on credit, and obtaining about a hundred seedling apple trees of several varieties at St. Charles, he proceeded on his northward journey, transporting the trees, it is said, on pack mules. His family may have accompanied him on this trip. It is recorded that he married Theresa Creely in 1788, and that a son was born in St. Louis about 1790.

Sometime in the summer of 1799 Tesson reached the site of his land grant. There he erected buildings, built some





fences, cultivated a small patch, and planted his apple trees.

For a number of years he lived at the head of the rapids, fraternizing with the Indians and trading liquor, pelts, and baubles. Life on the fringe of civilization was not adventurous. Dubuque, Giard, and other itinerant traders must have stopped on their way to St. Louis. There was, however, plenty of excitement when the ice went out of the river, when the flood waters rose, and when the Indians went on the warpath. Food was not his worst problem, for the river teemed with delicious fish, and game was abundant. Quail, prairie chickens, turkey, and deer were commonplace. Wild strawberries, blackberries, and grapes varied the menu while the apple trees were too young to bear.

Tesson seems to have been lacking in tact and business ability, however. He incurred the enmity of some of the Indians and was no match for the shrewd British traders. His trading operations failed, and he fell deeply into debt at St. Louis. After four years of patience and forbearance on the part of his creditors, all of his property was attached. The property was sold for the benefit of the creditors at the door of the parish church in St. Louis. The auction occurred in customary form at "the conclusion of high Mass, the people coming out in great number, after due notice given by the public crier of the town in a high and intelligible voice, on three successive Sundays, May 1, 8, 15, 1803." On the first Sunday "only \$25 was bid; on the second, \$30; on the third, the last adjudication, \$100; and subsequently, \$150 by Joseph Robidaux."

Robidaux permitted Tesson to remain on the tract for some time thereafter. It is not known whether Tesson was finally ejected from the land or whether he left of his own accord.

In the year 1834 the original Fort Des Moines was established by the United States Government on the Tesson grant, the buildings of the fort just north of the old apple orchard. At that time, evidence of a former settlement was there, and the old orchard of apple trees was a positive landmark. Several trees were bearing fruit, though it was very ordinary in quality. The Indians in the vicinity gathered the green apples so that none ever ripened. Chimney ruins and adobe remains on the same ground showed that someone had made a permanent settlement there.

During the three years the fort was maintained, a number of men illustrious in the history of Iowa and the Nation were there. The three companies of United States Dragoons, which constituted the garrison, were commanded by Stephen W. Kearney, famous western explorer. Albert M. Lea, in command





## The Tesson Apple Orchard

of one of the companies that made a thousand mile march across the prairies of Iowa and Minnesota in 1835, published the first popular description of the Iowa country. Zachary Taylor and Jefferson Davis were stationed at Fort Crawford at the time Fort Des Moines was established and may have visited the dragoons down the river. In 1837, Lt. Robert E. Lee was there, sent by the War Department to survey the Des Moines Rapids of the Mississippi for the purpose of making recommendations toward the improvement of the navigation of the river.

During the same year, 1837, when Fort Des Moines was abandoned, the town of Montrose was laid out by D. W. Kilbourne on the site of the old apple orchard. Unfortunately for Kilbourne, however, he failed to secure a perfect title to the land before beginning his operations, and the heirs of Thomas Riddick brought suit against him for possession. During the trial Kilbourne sought to discredit Tesson and his activities altogether, bringing as a witness the Indian Red Bird, who claimed that he himself had planted the apple trees and that Tesson was an imposter and a "che-wal-is-ki" (a rascal), who had never bought an acre of ground. Red Bird's story was in part substantiated by Black Hawk but the court upheld the Tesson title to the land, giving the Riddick heirs possession. The case eventually found its way to the Supreme Court of the United States, which affirmed the decisions of the lower courts.

As the town of Montrose developed, the Riddick heirs disposed of their inheritance to various people. The old Orchard site at last came into possession of George B. Denison who, in 1874, conveyed the plot to the town of Montrose, to be held in trust for the Old Settlers' Association. None of the trees survived. The last one is said to have died or disappeared more than half a century ago.

Lying opposite the historic town of Nauvoo, Illinois, Montrose was the starting point of the Mormon journey across Iowa toward Utah when the people of that sect fled from religious persecution in Illinois in 1846. A marker was erected in Montrose at the starting point of the westward trail.

To mark the site of the old apple orchard at Montrose, a tablet placed on a great boulder was unveiled in the Montrose schoolyard August 16, 1930. The program included a historical pageant by the Montrose Women's Civic Club. The site of Tesson's orchard was near the foot of Bluff Park Hill and was submerged by the waters of Lake Keokuk when the dam was completed and the waters released. The inscription



## The Tesson Apple Orchard

on the tablet reads as follows:

In commemoration of the First Orchard in what is now the State of Iowa. Growing from about 1796 to about 1879 on a plot 3,960 feet east from this point, it thrived beneath the flags of France, Spain, and the United States of America.

Erected A. D. 1930, by Montrose Women's Civic Club, the Iowa State Horticultural Society, the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa, and popular subscriptions.

The boulder is of granite, either meteoric or glacial in origin, irregular in shape, six by eight or ten feet in size, with an estimated weight of 30 tons. It was uprooted from Sam Little's farm on Snake Den Road, south of Pontoosuk.





## CHAPTER 2

### THE GATEWAY TO IOWA

The Mississippi River was a vital highway for emigrants from Virginia, Kentucky, and other states bordering on the Ohio or the Mississippi, but to the white-topped emigrant wagons from overland -- Chicago, Milwaukee, or any point in Illinois -- it loomed as an all but impassable barrier.

Wagons had to be unpacked and taken to pieces and their loads divided. Then the teams had to be unharnessed or unyoked and made to swim, horses led by the halter and oxen by the horns, at the side of a canoe. Imagine the impatience when 12 or more emigrant wagons stood in line on the Illinois shore, waiting to be ferried over -- the haste to get the wagons unloaded and taken to pieces, the long, disheartening wait while the entire freight was being transported bit by bit, and none too safely.

The first flatboat ferry to haul whole families and their loads at once to Iowa was at Keokuk, for the early settlers of the Half-Breed Tract. The crossing under the best conditions required an hour or more, but as early as 1841, the brawn of man began to be replaced. A paper published in Bloomington (Muscatine) in 1841 tells us, "A new boat, propelled by horse power, has lately been placed upon the river for the accommodation of the ferry; and though heavily made, all of green oak, and clumsy in its exterior, it swims like a swan and will cross in eight minutes with ease and safety." Eight minutes -- how those drivers shouted!

But the shouting ended in 1852, with the coming of steam. Regular trips were made every hour, sometimes every 15 minutes, and crossings now took only five minutes. A tremendous leap in carrying capacity went with the steamers, increasing the real speed of travel. The crude flat boat, capable of carrying a single wagon and team, had now grown to a gigantic affair that could carry 18 or more teams at once and could load on whole trains of wagons. Money was scarce, and ferry fees were often paid in goods -- chiefly calico or raw wool. Here is one table of ferriage rates that shows how prices ran.

footman	\$ .18-3/4
man and horse	.50
one horse and driver	.75
two horses, vehicle and driver	1.00
each additional horse or mule	.18-3/4
meat cattle, per head	.12 $\frac{1}{2}$
sheep or hogs, per head	.05
freight per hundred	.64





The fractions were a hangover from the day when money was almost non-existent and the only change from barter consisted of bits and picayunes -- the former a piece of the eighth part of a Spanish milled dollar, cut with a chisel into eight equal parts when the operation was fairly and honestly done, but becoming eight to ten parts when skill and trickery handled the chisel. The picayune in like manner was a Spanish quarter cut into four equal parts. The tale was based on the actual circulation of the crude bits of chiseled coin which survived a day when money was very scarce.

While the ferries of the early days rendered practically the same public service that the bridges do today, they were usually established for private profit. But the free public ferry was not wholly unknown. At the extra session of the First General Assembly the mayor and the aldermen of Fort Madison were authorized to provide for "The free carriage across the Mississippi River for one year, of all persons with their property coming to Fort Madison for the purpose of trading with its inhabitants, and bringing marketing and produce to the place."

The Mississippi River was the only adequate route for export, and its waters were closed by ice three months of the year. The principal markets to which products could be shipped and from which grocery supplies, farm implements, and mill machinery could be conveniently obtained were St. Louis and New Orleans. Purchases of hardware and dry goods were made largely in New York and shipped by sea to New Orleans and thence up the Mississippi. The other transportation routes were (1) New York via Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, (2) New York via Buffalo, the Great Lakes, and the Wisconsin, Fox, and Mississippi rivers. By either of these routes goods could be transported from New York to Keokuk in about 24 to 30 days and at about the same cost, that is, at from \$3.25 to \$5.25 per hundred weight.

As early as 1839 there was a continuous line of steamboats running from Dubuque via New Orleans and New York, to Liverpool and Bristol, England. The steamboat register of Keokuk shows that from March 14, 1841, to April 15, 1841, 33 boats arrived. Indeed, this traffic grew so rapidly that in 1844, 450 steamboats were employed in navigating the Mississippi.

On the upper Mississippi were two rapids, which, when the river was in its lowest stages, seriously menaced navigation. They were known as the Upper or Rock Rapids above Rock Island and the lower or Des Moines rapids, situated a short distance above the mouth of the Des Moines River between Keokuk and Montrose. Of the two the Des Moines rapids



constituted the more dangerous obstacle. Hand in hand with the growth of steamboat traffic developed the business of lightering. By 1835 lightering had become a stable, well organized industry. In 1832-33, when the Half-Breed Tract was surveyed, a square mile at the head of the rapids, and another at the foot, were set apart for town sites. These situations, later Montrose and Keokuk, became more valuable than any other because steamboats had to unload for lightering at these two points.

Just before "low stage" was reached the steamboat companies were accustomed to arrange the boats above and below the rapids, according to size and draught -- those of deeper draught below and the lighter ones above in order to take advantage of the shallower water of the Upper Mississippi. The "very low stage" was too low for even the lighters to operate which meant that freight had to be transported around the rapids on land. In the earlier years of overland portage the freight was carried along the riverbank on the backs of men or burros, while the passengers walked; but after roads were built, four and six-horse wagons were employed for freight while the passengers rode in handsome stagecoaches. Still later the construction of a railroad again altered the method of portage.

The lighters were manned by experienced crews, generally consisting of three men -- two oarsmen, one on each side, and a third, called a "gauger," who manipulated the sweep-oar at the stern as on lumber and log rafts. In addition, a special rapids pilot was in charge.

Running the Des Moines Rapids was risky business and scarcely a day passed without some narrow escape on the rocks, and major accidents occurred all too frequently. In 1828 the Mexico struck Steamboat Rock but managed to navigate as far as Nashville where she keeled over, and remained a wreck for 40 years. The Mechanic and the West Newton met a similar fate on Mechanic's Rock. Many a proud packet had been "hung-up" on the rocks of the rapids and been floated off by sinking a lighter barge on each side, fastening them securely to the vessel, plugging the holes in the sunken barges, and then pumping out the water.

In the fall when traffic was heaviest and the river was low, it was no uncommon sight to see from 15 to 20 palatial steamboats lined up at the wharves, both at Keokuk and Montrose, awaiting their turn to be lightered over the rapids. All these boats with their lights, their crowds, and their music, presented a brilliant spectacle. The hustle and excitement of transferring the passengers, of loading and unloading the freight, and of "wooding-up" the boats gave vibrant life to the scene. When the river development was at its peak in the early seventies, the average annual cost of





hauling the freight over the rapids amounted to about \$600,000.

Brawny Americans and rough-and-ready Irishmen constituted a large proportion of the lightermen and "ratters." They were a hard-drinking, loud-swearing, devil-may-care lot. After the Civil War the Irish were supplanted by ex-slaves who in a few years practically monopolized steamboat labor. On warm summer evenings these Negroes would come ashore with their banjoes at Montrose and Keokuk while their boats were waiting to be lightered, and play and sing the old plantation melodies until after midnight. They were fresh from the southland, freed from the sorrows of slavery, yet with the old life so vivid in consciousness that they sang on the banks of Montrose and Keokuk with hearts full of old memories and new inspiration.

Staunch though the lighter boats were, they endured such rough usage that two shipyards were kept busy at Montrose to repair and build them. In the course of time, as commerce on the upper river increased, there sprang up a demand for speedier and cheaper means of transportation over or around the Des Moines Rapids. Railroads were rapidly pushing westward, and a company was organized to build a line between Montrose and Keokuk. This road, built in 1855, started carrying freight around the rapids the following year.

The first locomotive in Keokuk, the J. K. Hornish, was brought over from Quincy, Illinois, on a barge, in August of 1856. (This road was taken over in 1870 by the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad.) The coming of the railroad caused great consternation among the lightermen of Keokuk and Montrose for they realized that the whistle of the locomotive sounded the end of their occupation. It changed, in fact, the whole life of those towns. Much to the relief of the public, the railroad lowered the lighterage charge of 50 cents a ton, between a third and a fifth of what it had been. The Hone Brothers, however, calmly continued to operate their tow boats until the Government canal was opened in 1877. That put an end to the lightering of steamboats over the Des Moines Rapids, and a once flourishing industry lives only in the memory of the older inhabitants.

Although the lumber for the first frame houses in the river towns of Iowa may have been imported from Ohio and Indiana sawmills, by the year 1839 the first log rafts from the pineries of Wisconsin came floating down the Mississippi.

The crews of strong, resourceful, unshaven, ex-keel-boatmen, upon whom depended the safe delivery of the rafts,





were generally rough characters. On duty night and day, and seldom ashore from the beginning to the end of the trip, they found plenty of time for smoking, drinking, card playing, boasting, gambling, and fighting between watches and crossings.

The raft boats, destined for hard labor, lacked the showiness of the packets. Designed to tow long rafts downstream, they carried no swinging gangplanks. Long after electricity was used for the packets, the rafters still depended on kerosene lanterns on deck and lamps in the cabins, and for many years the headlight alone was electric.

In navigating the rapids of the river, smaller light-draught steamers were used to take the rafts over in sections, replacing the clumsy sweeps for guiding the bows of the rafts.

The Rambo, Pilot, Irene D., Joe Long, and Wild Boy were among the first "bow boats."

Outstanding among the many raft boats that appeared upon the river in a period of 60 years were the Kit Carson, Van Sant, Last Chance, Brother Jonathan, and Eclipse. Going downstream these boats presented a gracious picture from the Lee County shore. Only the low throb of the engines, the slow motion of the wheel as it churned the water, the faint jingle of the boat bells, and the long line of smoke trailing lazily behind or drifting across the bluffs of Keokuk indicated the progress of this water caravan.

The log rafts, loaded with huge cribs of lumber, were often hundreds of feet long -- some of the largest exceeding 1,200 feet in length and 250 in width. In May 1902, Capt. George Winans brought down from Stillwater, Minnesota, the largest lumber raft that ever traveled the Mississippi. It contained 14,000,000 feet of lumber -- 11,000,000 feet in the raft proper and 3,000,000 of top loading. The raft was 1,715 feet (one third of a mile) long and 237 feet wide. It would have filled a train over ten miles long. In the river, water-soaked, the raft and its top loading weighed about 56,000,000 pounds or 28,000 tons. The lumber was worth \$210,000. There were 23 men in the rafting expedition -- boat crews, raftsmen and officers.

The actual traveling time of the big raft between Stillwater and St. Louis was 40 days. When it reached St. Louis it contained less than 2,000,000 feet of lumber, the rest of it having been delivered along the river. Great sections were left at Burlington, Keokuk, and other Iowa towns.



At almost every town along the river from St. Paul to St. Louis there was at least one sawmill. Fort Madison and Keokuk turned out thousands of feet of lumber a year. One captain made five trips in 55 days from Prescott, Minnesota, to Keokuk, establishing a record. As the rafting industry increased many of the larger lumber companies owned and operated their own boats, but smaller companies depended upon the regular steamboat companies and the free lance captains. S. and J. C. Atlee of Fort Madison were the first mill men to bring logs from the forests of Minnesota and Wisconsin down the river by raft steamboat, to be manufactured into lumber. The steamer Sam Atlee was the first raft boat on the Mississippi to have an electric headlight. The last raft on the Mississippi was towed by the Atlee steamers Ottumwa Belle and Fathfinder, and was brought down the river in 1915.

The rafting business grew to immense proportions, reaching its height about 1890. With the disappearance of the forests and the raft boats, most of the sawmills along the river also disappeared. Many of the buildings were torn down, the machinery taken out and the site occupied by some new industry. But along the riverbank an inquisitive stroller may still uncover part of a heavy timber, a rusted spike, the link of an old log chain, or the trace of sluice waves -- all that remains as evidence of the once great traffic in logs.

During the ten years before the Civil War the steamboat had come to its finest development and was a sort of floating hotel and warehouse that resounded with life and music and color. The captains painted their paddle boxes with the names of the boats on a background of a brilliant sunburst with gray eagles, or golden eagles, war eagles, or spread eagles. The Minnesota's paddle box carried the state's coat of arms; the Minnesota Belle had the picture of a buxom maid with a bundle of wheat and a reaping hook; the General Brooke and the Phil Sheridan carried enormous portraits of their namesakes. Others had their cabins blazing with lurid paintings, many of which were symbolic warnings to travelers against strong drink.

When a new steamboat was launched there was no breaking of a bottle of champagne over its bow, but honor to the occasion was fully and effectively done. It was customary for the builder to prepare a barrel of eggnog heavily laced with whiskey and set it in a convenient place, with tin cups around it, for the free disposal of the crowd. Instead of pouring a libation into the river, they poured it into themselves where they felt it would do the most good.





Steamboat races were sudden and unpremeditated. Shippers and passengers preferred the fast boats, the first boat at a landing usually received the passengers and freight in waiting. Another boat, following soon after, got nothing but the leavings. The boat that swept the river against all competition signalized her championship by carrying a big broom on her pilot house. When a better boat passed her under way, she had to pull her broom in until she passed the champion and thus regained her title.

The showboat life attracted a class of people who were frowned upon by the stern moralists of the day, and shortly before the Civil War their unpopularity was so great that they were driven from the river. After the Civil War, however, they rose up again and flourished richly during the seventies and eighties, when they began to thin down until gradually they were only a few, and those few stopped only at the hamlets. Among the troupes that visited Keokuk and Fort Madison were: Carl Wagner's Minstrels; Stones' River Circuses, Burlesque Opera Troupe, and Lord's Dramatic Club, portrayes of Mother's Dying Child and Our American Cousin. The Banjo carried a noted Negro minstrel troupe.

Often the showboats and their performers had "sheriff trouble," and were stranded for not meeting their expenses. In one instance the Ginsie, a steamboat conveying J. A. Wallace's Great Palace Circus, was seized at Keokuk by the United States Marshal for failure to pay debts. The poor visitors were forced to continue playing their acts for a few more weeks, and the children of Keokuk, unable to see the heartaches over unpaid bills, enjoyed the show for a while longer.

### The Rapids Canal

Along the Iowa shore, between Keokuk and Montrose, there lies buried beneath the waters of Lake Keokuk an engineering work of magnificent accomplishment. The Mississippi Rapids canal was for more than a third of a century a waterway of considerable economic importance to the people of the entire upper Mississippi Valley.

The lightermen, rough, tough, and ready, did their work well, but Lee County was not to go on doing things the hard way forever. Agitation for the improvement of the channel over the rapids whereby the river traffic might be carried on unimpeded was begun as early as 1830. The first official investigation was made by Robert E. Lee, then a young lieutenant, who was directed by the War Department to make a detailed survey of the Des Moines Rapids of the Mississippi. As the result of his investigation, Lieutenant Lee proposed



that one of the natural channels should be increased in width and depth so as to accommodate loaded boats at all times. It was found, however, that this plan offered great difficulty in execution, that the cost would be exorbitant, and that there would be grave danger to vessels navigating this channel at night and in high wind. Other plans were offered, but were no better, and there the matter rested until January 1849 when Gov. Ansel Briggs approved an act of the Second General Assembly of Iowa authorizing the Navigation and Hydraulic Company of the "Mississippi Rapids" to acquire a right-of-way for a canal around the lower rapids of the Mississippi River.

In 1852 an appropriation was secured for the National Government to "blow out the channel" after the fashion recommended by Lieutenant Lee. This work, however, proved disheartening, and the appropriation entirely inadequate. During the summer of 1866 a new survey was taken of the rapids, which resulted in the proposal that a lock canal be built along the Iowa shore. Congress authorized the project, March 1867, to be under the supervision of the War Department, and work was begun the following October. The plans called for the construction of a canal along the river from Nashville (now Galland) to Keokuk by building a guard bank three or four hundred feet from the shore and excavating the channel thus formed to a depth sufficient to provide five feet of water at the extreme low stage of the river. One of the most difficult tasks in the construction of the canal was the excavation of the rocky channel inside the guard bank. Electrically discharged dynamite for blasting beneath the surface of the water had not yet been introduced, so that common black powder had to be used. When the river embankment, composed of stone and earth, was completed the wall was ten feet wide on top and about 20 feet high. The locks, each 320 feet long and 80 feet wide, were constructed of the best magnesium limestone laid in hydraulic cement. The mechanism for opening and closing the gates and wickets was controlled by hydraulic pressure furnished by pumping engines.

Between one and two thousand men were employed in building the canal. Many of the men were Swedes that had just arrived from the old country, the rest were Irish. They lived in shanties along the riverbank between Keokuk and Montrose. Drinking was rampant. There were nearly as many saloons as other business houses.

The building of the Des Moines canal, for the time in which it was executed, was an engineering feat compared by some to the construction of the Panama Canal. Modern machinery was almost unknown. As many as 50 men were required to do the work of a single steam shovel. High water often interfered with the work. In April 1870, construction had





to be suspended on account of the flood, and considerable damage was done. Sometimes money ran out, and work ceased until Congress made new appropriations. When the work was nearly completed contractors were changed, which caused delay and added expense. Just a little less than ten years after the first spadeful of earth was turned, on October 8, 1867, the canal was opened for traffic. The locks were completed long before the rest of the canal was finished, but at last, on August 22, 1877, the steamboat Montana passed through the canal from Fort Madison, and that evening, thronged with public officials, newspaper representatives, and prominent personages, she led the Northwestern, the Golden Eagle, and the Cricket from Keokuk to the head of the canal and back. On shore a Burlington excursion train accompanied the flotilla. The band played, speeches were made, canal officials were feted, and enthusiasm ran high.

The canal teemed with packets, rafts, and excursion steamers, but river transportation had reached its peak before the canal was begun and was now rapidly declining.

For 35 years the canal remained in operation. Then, during the second week of June 1913, the flood gates of the new Keokuk Dam were closed and the waters of Lake Keokuk flowed over the old canal. No vestige remained visible save for a few feet of the inner abutment of the lower lock, which housed the well to shelter the automatic apparatus for recording the stage of the river.





## CHAPTER 3

### THE BLACK HAWK WAR

The Black Hawk War was the last major struggle between the white men and the Red men for the Upper Mississippi Valley. While it has usually been considered to belong to the history of Illinois, this war was really a part of the history of Lee County and the State of Wisconsin. Before the beginning of hostilities, the Black Hawk Indians lived on the eastern slope of Iowa. They started on the warpath from Keokuk, gathered at Fort Madison, crossed the Mississippi and fought the only two battles of the war in Wisconsin.

Saukenuk, the Indian village that had once been the home of six or seven thousand Indians, was for 30 years the center of the opposition to the encroachments of the white men upon Indian lands on both sides of the Mississippi. In this bitter struggle Black Hawk and Keokuk were the leading actors. They disagreed violently over removal from their lands. To Keokuk, fighting against the whites could bring nothing but misfortune, while to Black Hawk surrender of the homes of his ancestors to strangers was dishonorable and cowardly.

Year after year the white squatters had invaded the Indian lands, defying the provisions of the treaties. They had devoured or destroyed the growing crops the squaws had cultivated. They tore down the frail fences, and turned loose horses and cattle to graze over the Sac and the Fox burial grounds. In the spring of 1830, when the Indians returned from their annual hunt for food, Keokuk and his followers stopped on the Iowa River and built a new village. Black Hawk and his band went back to Saukenuk where they found their lands had been surveyed and sold to the white settlers, their teepees seized and occupied, while their own wives and children wandered shelterless on the riverbank. Black Hawk drove the intruders out and returned the wigwams to their owners. In reprisal, the whites raised so great an outcry that the Government decreed that Saukenuk must be destroyed. June 1831 saw the Indians driven across the Mississippi to the west bank of the river, with their return to the east bank prohibited without special authority from the United States. It was now too late to plant corn again and the Indians came to autumn with no food for the winter.

The cause of the actual outbreak of the Black Hawk War was the return to the east bank of the Mississippi by Black Hawk and his followers in April 1832. When the authorities accused him of broken faith and of planning a treacherous assault, Black Hawk denied the charge of treachery, stating that his people were suffering for food and that the purpose

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of his journey was to join the friendly Winnebagoes in raising a crop of corn. He pointed out that the women and children were with him. But the whites would listen to no explanations and his refusal to return only brought 2,000 volunteer soldiers to pursue him.

In the face of a terrific storm of wind and rain, Black Hawk managed to get his band, including women and children and their effects, across the raging river. The current and the wind were so strong that their canoes, many of them lashed together, were carried twelve or more miles down the stream. That crossing marked one of the most amazing feats of Black Hawk's career. The white soldiers burned Saukenuk from end to end, but Black Hawk's people were already gone.

On the west bank of the Mississippi, about 12 miles below Rock Island, Black Hawk and his band made camp with neither food nor shelter. Upon threat of pursuit, he and his chief warriors returned to Rock Island to sign articles of capitulation, which included a promise never again to cross the Mississippi without the permission of the President of the United States or the Governor of Illinois.

Black Hawk retired to his little house to "live a quiet life." It would have been better had he mingled more with some of the worldly-wise chiefs, such as Wepello or Keokuk. Instead, he was alone with his brooding thoughts upon the wrongs his people had suffered. All he heard were the complaints of the women, who wanted to return to Saukenuk for the corn, beans, and pumpkins they had planted; and louder still rose the clamor of the young men of his band who wanted to go to war again. Black Hawk himself had no further desire for war but he was over-ruled by his young men who, he feared, would depose him if he did not give in to them, and that fate he could not bring himself to accept. With this background of unrest, he was ripe for the influence of two evil counselors, who appealed to his vanity and made him believe that with one bold stroke he could regain what he had lost. One of these counselors was Neapope, a leader and instigator of trouble among the younger men of Black Hawk's band. He has been described as a man of abounding physical vitality, an orator with a booming voice, a "bold, cunning, shrewd, talkative, revengeful, and treacherous Indian, an inordinate boaster and a first-class liar." The other evil counselor was the self-styled prophet Webokieshiek, reputedly Neapope's half-brother. This prophet had a village on the Rock River where he held a barbaric spiritual court, interpreting dreams and giving out spiritual advice.

By the spring of 1831 Neapope had deserted Black Hawk and gone to Canada with the avowed purpose of talking matters over with the British. On his way home he stopped at





the prophet's village where he learned that Black Hawk had been forced across the Mississippi. It was at this moment that the two men concocted a plot to bring on another war, and Neapope joined Black Hawk on the Iowa River where he recounted fairy tales that Black Hawk accepted for truth. The British, he said, would send guns, ammunition, and provisions early in the spring. The prophet had likewise received wampum and tobacco from the different nations on the lakes. The Ottawas, Chippewas, Pottawattamies, and Winnebagoes were his to command. With supplies so abundant and allies sure, Black Hawk thought that with only a little exertion on his part he could return happiness to his people. He promised to get his braves together and to recruit as many as he could from the other Indian villages.

Keokuk, when appealed to for aid, frankly said that Black Hawk had been misled by liars and did everything he could to prevent the wild adventure, even to persuading Colonel Davenport to ask for Government interference. But neither Washington nor St. Louis could be aroused to any further interest in a disgruntled old Indian.

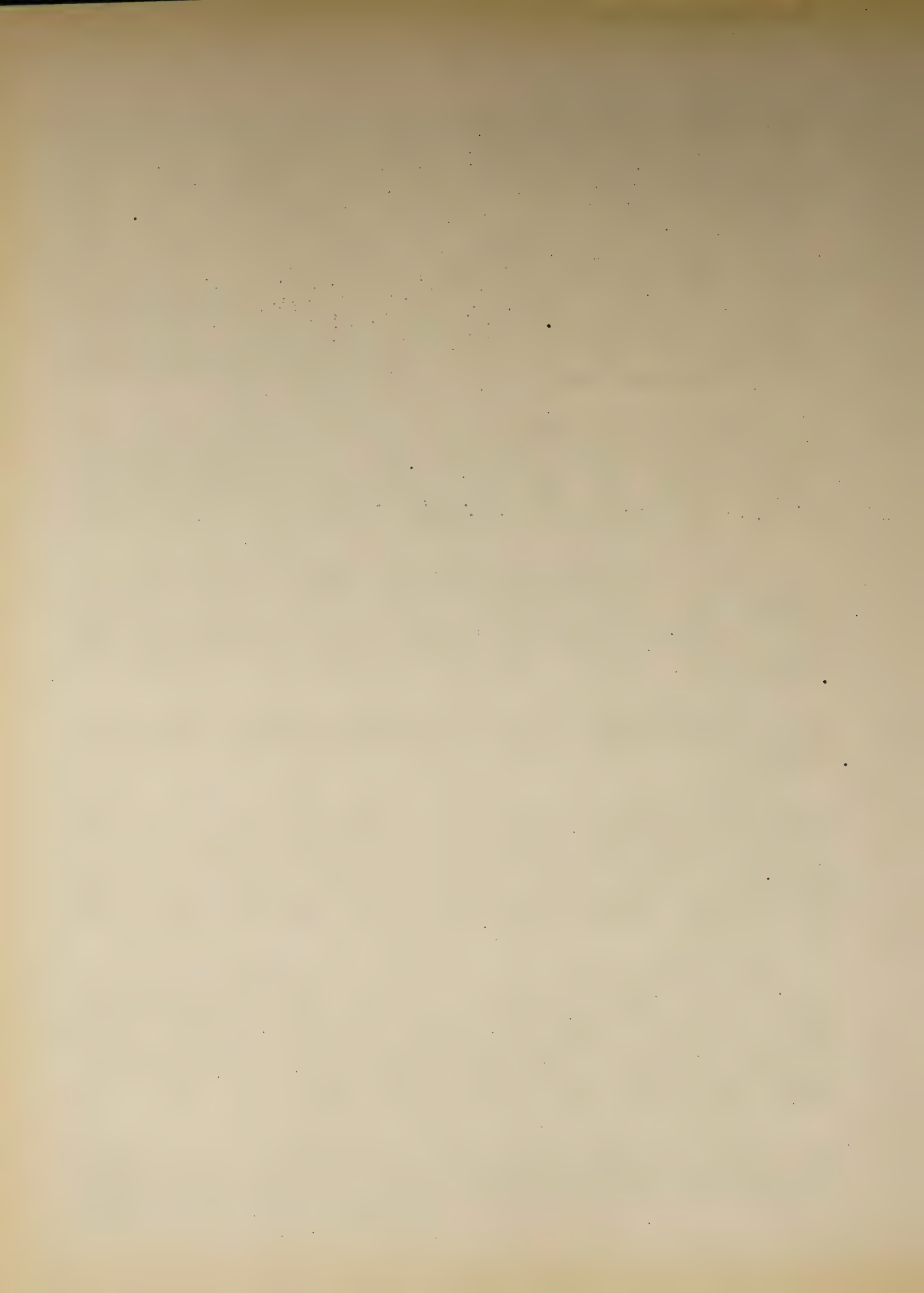
Black Hawk, still believing in British aid and a confederacy of Indian nations on call, made a last attempt to recruit men from Keokuk's band on his way down the Iowa River. This attempt was so aflame with passion and eloquent appeal that it became known in history as the "War Dance on the Iowa."

With his warriors, some on ponies and the others in canoes, Black Hawk led his band down the river to Keokuk's village.

Keokuk was ready for him. He had asked for a representative of the white race at his council of war and had been granted a scout and interpreter, one Josiah Smart, a man of some education, honest character, and good memory who would be able to give an accurate account of the speeches of the two orators. Keokuk alone knew of his presence there, and had carefully concealed the white spy lest he be killed.

Black Hawk set up his war post near Keokuk's lodge. He himself, and his subalterns in turn, drove their tomahawks into the soft wood of the post as a declaration of war. After that his warriors circled around it, each of them striking the post as his enlistment in the war. Then followed the chants of the war dance until the braves had worked themselves into a fighting delirium.

When the dance was at its height, Black Hawk made his way to the war post and signaled for silence. Then he began an impassioned speech in which he narrated the heart-burning tales of the wrongs the Indians had suffered from the coming





of the white men. His long recital ended with an appeal for war to reclaim their former homes. This would be easy, he stated. Their friends, the British, were coming with arms and men to fight their battles for them and best of all, the sound of the war-whoop would bring the many Indian tribes to unite as brothers in this struggle to turn back the paleface invaders.

Black Hawk's speech roused the already war-mad warriors to a frenzy. Keokuk, quiet and intent, had listened to the incendiary words and watched as his men one by one hurled themselves into the mad adventure of his rivals. Called upon to speak, he made his way to the war post but did not strike it. The moment was fateful. Should he refuse to lead his men to battle, in their fury they might kill him or desert him for another leader. But Keokuk, however dismayed, was master of himself. The speech he made has sometimes been likened in its power to Mark Anthony's in the Roman forum.

Adroitly he stressed the numbers of the white men and the hopelessness of overcoming them in war. "Their cabins are as plenty as the trees of the forest, and their soldiers are springing up like grass on the prairie," he said. He then spoke of the duty of a chief to lead his people in peace as in war. They had chosen war. But what would they do with their old and infirm, their women and children.

Then it was that he gave them their choice. "I will lead you forth upon the warpath, but upon this condition: That we first put our wives and children, our aged and infirm, gently to sleep in that slumber which knows no waking this side of the spirit land...For we go upon the long trail which has no return, -- from which, in a few short moons, we shall follow them."

While the warriors stood in stunned silence at this proposal, Keokuk turned to Black Hawk in bitter reproach that his long experience upon the warpath had not taught him the futility of his venture; that brooding upon the repeated wrongs done his race had given him the sad eloquence to arouse men to a sacrifice, both terrible and useless. Truth after bitter truth Keokuk hurled at the war chief: Why had he had not realized that if the British father had promised him aid, the equipment would now be ready? "The British father," he told his audience, "is at peace with our Great Father at Washington, and neither knows of nor cares, for you or your grievances." As for the lie about the other tribes awaiting the signal to fight with them, he demanded, "If this be true, why are not their great war chiefs here tonight?"



## The Black Hawk War

Keokuk, seeing that the Indians were coming under the spell of his reasoning, made a final appeal to Black Hawk to "abandon this wild, visionary and desperate undertaking," recounting to him his former victories, but warning of certain dark defeat if he did not now turn back.

By this remarkable speech Keokuk won to peace not only his own men but many of Black Hawk's. The next morning, however, Black Hawk went his way down the Iowa River to the Mississippi. Unchanged in his belief, he could not turn back.

With the meagerest of resources in provisions and munitions, and encumbered by a band of dependents, Black Hawk long outmaneuvered, outmarched, and often outfought his pursuers until he was trapped on the Mississippi below the mouth of the Bad Axe River. On Sycamore Creek, with only 40 warriors, he routed two battalions of white soldiers. On the Wisconsin, with only 50, he held back an army of 600 mounted men. On the first of August, Black Hawk gathered together the remnant of his band on the Mississippi and offered to surrender, but the soldiers ignored his white flag. The next day the shooting continued without mercy upon unarmed men, women and children even while they sought escape by swimming across the Mississippi. More than 300 Indians were massacred in this, the Battle of Bad Axe.

Black Hawk and a few of his followers managed to escape, but were captured by treacherous Winnebagoes, delivered up to Col. Zachary Taylor and by him sent to Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis. In 1833 he was taken by his captors to Washington, then to Fortress Monroe, from which he was released June 4 by order of the President. He was then conducted through several large cities to impress him with the power of the whites before being conveyed down the Mississippi, past his old home, to Fort Armstrong. Here he was required to make formal surrender of his power as chief of the Sac and Fox to Keokuk, who had now been made chief by command of the Government. This was the moment of his bitterest humiliation, softened only by his respect for the Great Father at Washington.

Never again was Black Hawk permitted to have a village or band. He went to Lee County where he built a lodge on Devil's Creek not far from the old Fort Des Moines, which had been vacated. Early in the spring of 1838 he moved his little family to the banks of the Des Moines River, near Iowaville in Van Buren County, and lived there until his death on October 3, 1838.

Because the important men of the Sac and Fox were absent in Rock Island at an assembly of Indians and Government officials, Black Hawk was given only a simple burial service.





Dressed in a suit of regimentals, the great Indian's body was placed on a hewn board, one end of which entered the ground, while the other was raised about three feet and rested on posts, thus keeping the body in a sitting position. The medals Black Hawk had been awarded decorated his breast, his sword lay at his side, his cane fitted into his hand, moccasins covered his feet, and food for three days was provided that he might be sustained on his journey to the spirit land. A mound was then erected over him by leaning puncheons against a ridge pole supported on two forked sticks. Over all was laid a covering of thick turf. A pole bearing the American Flag and a post with pictorial inscriptions were placed at either end. Then, around the entire grave, a stockade about eight or ten feet high was built.

Keokuk led his people on their removal to Kansas in 1845 and died in Franklin County in that state in 1848. In 1883 his remains were brought back to the Gate City. A bust of him is in the marble room of the United States Senate in Washington. A bronze statue marks his last resting place on a promontory in Rand Park, Keokuk, overlooking the great river.



## CHAPTER 4

### HALF-BREED TRACT

On November 3, 1804, five Indian chiefs of the Sac and Fox nations entered into a treaty at St. Louis whereby they sold to the United States 51 millions of acres of land lying between the Illinois, the Fox, and the Mississippi rivers, in what was then the territory of Illinois. The consideration paid for this vast stretch of country was protection on the part of the Government, and goods delivered to the amount of \$2,234.50, with an annuity paid in goods, of \$600 to the Sac, and \$400 to the Fox, forever. The treaty further provided that as long as the Government held the lands, "the Indians belonging to the said tribes shall enjoy the privilege of living and hunting upon them." The tribes always maintained that the chiefs had no power or authority to make such a treaty, as they had been sent to St. Louis to obtain the release of an Indian who had been imprisoned for the killing of a white man, and consequently were not empowered to relinquish the title to any lands which the tribes held or occupied.

The Indians never accepted this treaty as binding upon themselves as tribes, although the United States, in every subsequent treaty, forced the Sac and Fox to reaffirm the treaty of 1804. By the last treaty in 1825 concerning this tract of land, the 119,000 acres of land were again reserved to the half-breeds of the Sac and Fox nations; this land was again described as lying between the Des Moines and the Mississippi, touching the town of Keokuk, and all of the lands lying between said line, and the junction of the rivers.

The title was the same as that of other Indian titles, the United States retaining a reversionary interest in the land and depriving the holders thereof of the right to sell or dispose of it.

There has been much speculation as to who secured for the half-breeds this immense and valuable tract. Various persons have claimed the honor, but two men only would seem to deserve the title of benefactor: one, a half-breed by the name of Morgan who had made a surpassingly eloquent plea in behalf of the mixed tribes; the other, Maurice Blondeau, a genial Frenchman who had for years prior to the enactment of the treaty been a sort of mediator for the Indians with the Government officials.

The American Fur Company had posts on both sides of the Mississippi River during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The agents had Indian wives and reared large families: hunters and trappers came also and settled along the





river, put up log huts and brought their squaws and likewise reared families. Thus in a few years there sprang up a mixed population among the Indians on the borders. Some adopted the blanket and took up the wandering lives of the Indians, while others, too proud to reside in wigwams, tried to make a place for themselves and their children among the white settlers related to them by ties of kinship.

Julien Dubuque had an Indian wife. The second white settler in Iowa, Chevalier Merais, in the year 1812, married the daughter of the chief of the Iowa Indians. Dr. Samuel C. Muir, a native of Scotland and a surgeon in the United States army, was stationed at Fort Edwards, which eventually became Warsaw, Illinois. He had married into the Fox tribe, and when the Government had later issued an order for all officers in the army to abandon their Indian wives, Dr. Muir resigned his office, saying, as he held up to public view his infant daughter, "May God forbid that a son of Celedonia should ever desert his child or disown his clan." He died in Keokuk in 1832, from cholera, survived by a wife and five children. The property was wasted in litigation and this "brave and faithful wife, left friendless and penniless," at last returned with her children to her own people on the upper Missouri.

At Farmers' Point, which was founded in 1831, there were a number of white settlers who had Indian wives. Antoine Le Claire, one of the founders of Davenport, took for his wife the granddaughter of a Sac chief, and he, himself, was the son of a granddaughter of a Pottawattamie chieftain. Lemoliese, a French trader who lived near Sandusky in Lee County, had an Indian wife. Even the daughter of Black Hawk was engaged to a merchant of Fort Madison, but the engagement was broken off.

During the year 1833, a meeting of half-breed Indians was held at Farmers' Trading Post to prepare a petition to Congress requesting the passage of an act authorizing the half-breeds to sell and dispose of the land holdings granted by the treaty of 1824. Congress, on June 30, 1834, passed an act whereby the Government relinquished to the half-breeds, as a class, the reversionary interests it held, together with power to convey title. It was through this act that the half-breeds became possessed of a fee simple title which caused the tangle of litigation later on.

Among the first questions raised by the court in the construction of this statute was "Who are the half-breeds for whom this tract is intended?" The obvious answer was that it was intended to be for the use of those whites of the Sac and Fox nations who did not wear a blanket and who were not entitled to annuities conferred upon the Indians of



these tribes. It was contended that the half-breeds preferred the annuities as many had decided to remain among the Indians. All agreed that they would be willing to accept both the land and the annuities. Soon the half-breed tract became one of the most active real estate holdings in the west. Conditions as to the sale of the land were shocking. One Indian trader of Agency, later Agency City, purchased claims worth several thousand dollars for such prices as a horse, a pony, a saddle, or a barrel of whiskey. Keokuk, as chief of the tribe, would attach his signature to the paper, to the effect that the person was a half-breed and related by blood to the Sac and Fox nation. The person was easily influenced to partake of whiskey and would thus dispose of his title for a mere pittance to some land shark. So many transactions of this kind went on that all these land contracts became known as "blanket claims."

The whites were not the only culprits in the fraud. The Indians soon discovered a way to profit for themselves. Those of mixed blood would get some Indian to swear to his having Sac or Fox blood, and would then dispose of land to which he held no title whatever. The law had put up no barriers against wrongdoing in this field. There were no boundary lines, no proper surveys, with the result that conflicts arose which affected titles for years afterward. The main stumbling block centered in the point that the right to sell had not been given to the individual Indians, but to the half-breeds as a class.

The act of Congress was silent as to the method to be used in dividing the land, and soon full-blooded and half-breed Indians sold land with no regard for any legal rights. Often the same tract would be sold to several persons. Whites had settled on this land as squatters, believing that as soon as it was thrown open to settlement they would come in as original settlers. Hence there might be on the same parcel of land half-breeds, Indians, speculators, and squatters, all claiming title to it on some pretext or other.

Real estate companies abounded, a number being organized to deal only in half-breed lands. The most important of these was the New York Land Company, which had Dr. Isaac Galland of Montrose looking after its local interests.

The territorial legislature of Wisconsin on January 16, 1838, passed an act requiring all persons claiming land under the Half-Breed Tract to file their claims with the clerk of the district court of Lee County within one year, showing the nature of the title upon which they relied. The same act appointed three commissioners at \$6 a day to take testimony as to the titles claimed by the respective persons. Lands not thus disposed of were to be sold, and the proceeds divided among such half-breeds as could properly establish their claims and who had not otherwise been fully paid in lands.





After the commissioners had heard claims against the land for two years, the First Iowa Territorial Legislative Assembly of 1838-39 repealed the law requiring commissioners. The flood of claims had been so great that mountains of unfinished business still remained to be done, and it was clear that a simpler method of proving title was necessary. Toward that end, the Assembly enacted a law granting partition of the half-breed lands, and added a requirement that the two former commissioners should bring suit against the lands for their services. Accordingly suits were brought and the entire tract of 119,000 acres was sold to Hugh T. Reid, an attorney, for \$5,773.32. When the sheriff executed a deed to the land thus sold, Reid became the largest landowner in the borders of Iowa.

Suits for partition of the lands were numerous in Lee County, and finally a commission was appointed in 1841 to divide the tract. Francis Scott Key, author of the "Star Spangled Banner", who was then an attorney for the New York Land Company and a large share holder in it, drew up the decree by which the Half-breed Tract was divided into 101 separate shares. It was arranged that each claimant should draw his partition by lot, and that he should abide by the result, whatever it might be. On October 6, 1841, a plat of the lands was filed as official record. On the strength that plat lands were still held 100 years later in 1941.

But the division of the lands did not stop the litigation. For ten years after the plat was filed, the courts were crowded with claims and counter claims over the Half-Breed Tract. These no longer concerned the rights of the half-breeds however. Ignorant of the white man's laws, they long since had disposed of all their holdings for ridiculous pittance to the powerful land companies or their agents. It was to protect the white settlers that the legislature passed law after law for the next ten years.

Speculators had been using every conceivable trick to gain possession of these lands, now the most valuable in the Territory. Anyone, therefore, who had the faintest color of title by way of settlement or land improvements on the property, or even one receipt for taxes paid, went to court to fight for possession with confidence that however long the battle, the law was on his side.

In December 1850, the United States Supreme Court at long last cut the snarled knot of unquiet titles to the Half-Breed Tract with a decision against the purchaser of land sold in sheriff sale to Hugh T. Reid. This concerned the Honori title over the old apple orchard on the site of Montrose, the oldest title to lands in Iowa.





## CHAPTER 5

### THE STORY OF IOWA'S FIRST SCHOOL

In 1830, three years before the Iowa country was officially opened for settlement, the first school was established at Galland in Lee County.

Prominent among the newcomers to this vast new country was Dr. Isaac Galland. In 1829, he brought his family across the river from Illinois, and settled at Ah-wi-pe-tuck. This was an Indian name signifying the beginning of the cascades. Later it became known as Nashville and then Galland. It was about six miles up the river from the site that became Keokuk. Soon afterward the families of Isaac R. Campbell, James and Samuel Brierly, W. P. Smith, and Abel Galland arrived, and by the early thirties there existed a typical pioneer settlement.

Dr. Galland and his white neighbors, realizing the need of educational privileges for their children, built a log schoolhouse, the first "temple of learning" west of the Mississippi and north of the Missouri River. The task was simple because there were no legal technicalities to be followed or financial difficulties to be overcome. Dr. Galland simply hired a young man to teach in his "district" which for all intents and purposes extended north of the State of Missouri to Canada and west to the Pacific Ocean.

The teacher of this wilderness school was Berryman Jennings, a scholarly gentleman, and a Kentuckian by birth. He was born in 1807 and little else is known of his early life until he reached the age of 20. At that time he established his residence at Commerce, Illinois, which later became Nauvoo. Three years later, he was singled out by Dr. Galland to come over to Ah-wi-pe-tuck and teach in the proposed school. For compensation he received board and lodging in the Galland home and the use of the doctor's rather limited medical library. It is a fair assumption that Berryman Jennings must have been an energetic young man of unusual education for his years, else Dr. Galland, versed in literature and art as well as medicine, would not have selected him to instruct the youth of the newly established settlement.

This first schoolhouse was a little log building 10 by 12 feet in dimension -- a typical pioneer cabin. It was situated in a clearing on the bank of the Mississippi at the head of the Des Moines Rapids. To the west, a line of timberclad hills closely hemmed in the little settlement. A small creek that found its way from the woods and ran past the cabin helped to "fence" the schoolyard. Across the





dashing waters of the rapids, up and down the river as far as the eye could see, lay the Illinois country, resplendent in the gorgeous hues of autumn.

Forty-four years after that notable Indian summer when the first school was opened in Iowa, Jennings described the schoolhouse in detail. It was made entirely of unhewn logs, notched close and mudded for comfort. The cabin was roofed with clapboards weighted down with cross poles. This was to economize time and nails, both all too scarce at that time. There was a puncheon (split log) floor and, directly opposite the door, a fireplace made of packed dry dirt. The chimney was "topped out" with sticks and mud. On each side of the building a section of the logs was left out and the openings were covered with oiled paper, mounted on a framework of slender strips of wood to admit the light.

The furniture was of the most primitive character. Seats were made by splitting a tree of some eight or ten inches in diameter in halves, smoothing the split sides and driving pins into holes bored in the half round sides for legs. Under the windows was the writing desk, which was made by boring holes into the wall at a slight angle, then into these holes were driven stout wooden pins to support a wide board, the top of which was dressed smooth to serve as a table where the pupils could take their turns at writing. The few scholars interested in learning the art of writing had to stand up at these desks or furnish their own high stools. Books were few and globes and maps were entirely missing.

The first term of school lasted through October, November and December of 1830. Washington Galland, son of Dr. Isaac Galland, and James W. Campbell, were the two first pupils. Others who studied the three R's at Ah-wi-pe-tuck were Tolliver Dedman, James Dedman, Thomas Brierly, David Campbell, and Eliza Galland. They ranged in age from six to 16. Later there were perhaps sixteen or eighteen pupils, some of whom came from the Illinois side of the river, crossing the water either in a canoe or on the thick ice.

The pioneer pedagogue proceeded on the theory that "to spare the rod" was to "spoil the child", and not many children were spoiled! James W. Campbell, who was one of Jennings' first pupils, said in an address before the Old Settlers' Association in 1875, "I remember him well, for when kind and oft-repeated words failed to impress upon the memory of Washington Galland and myself the difference between A and B, he had neither delicacy nor hesitancy about applying the rod, which usually brightened our intellects."

After the building had been used for a time for educational purposes it was converted into a little kitchen for



## The Story of Iowa's First School

a pioneer family. Still later it served as a shelter for livestock. Eventually it fell into decay and was used for firewood. Even the site on which that little structure stood was to disappear. When the great Keokuk dam was built, the old school ground was submerged under 20 feet of water, about three or four hundred feet from the shore line.

On June 27, 1923, the Keokuk Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a native boulder near this historic spot, on the river side of the scenic highway just outside the village of Galland. A bronze tablet was affixed to the boulder by the same organization October 18, 1924, and a deed to a plot of ground 20 feet square was given by Timothy J. Harrington and Ella T. Harrington to the State Historical Society of Iowa to be preserved in the archives, in memory of the first school in Iowa.

In October 1928, plans were considered by the Lee County School Masters' Club, to construct a replica of the memorable old building so that Iowa's youth might better visualize the educational beginnings in their commonwealth. With funds raised by various organizations, individuals, schools, and school children of Lee County, enough money was provided to carry the project through to completion. The building was finished in the late summer of 1940 with the assistance of the National Youth Administration. On October 4, the replica of this first Iowa School was dedicated, with Gov. George A. Wilson of Iowa delivering the address. The Governor's address suggested the hope that this historic building might serve as a memorial to the early pioneers who sacrificed and endured the hardships of those early days, in order that children of the years to come might enjoy the schools and the country in which they lived. "To the children of our great state," said Governor Wilson, "may it ever be a symbol of our educational opportunities."

Berryman Jennings, the teacher of this first school, after completing his duties at Galland, went to Burlington, where he became a merchant. In 1847, he joined an emigrant train and made the journey to Oregon by wagon. His wife died on the plains en route, leaving him alone with a small son. He became a very prominent man in the West and was considered a millionaire at one time. He served in the Oregon State Legislature and his second marriage took place in 1857 in the home of the Governor of that State. The bride was a Mrs. Pope, who with seven children survived him. A son by this union was still thought to be living on the old homestead near Oregon City in 1941. Mr. Jennings was greatly interested in Masonic work and was the first Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Oregon and the first Senior Grand Deacon of the Grand Lodge of California.





## The Story of Iowa's First School

Although Dr. Galland traveled widely, most of his life was spent in Lee County where he practiced medicine along with his numerous other activities. As a pioneer of Iowa, his name is inseparably associated with its history. He contributed in large measure to its settlement and along many lines aided in laying the foundation for Iowa's later progress and prosperity. Dr. Galland died in Fort Madison in 1858 and was buried in the old city cemetery.

Eleanor Galland, daughter of Dr. Isaac Galland, was born on February 4, 1830. She was the first white child born in the State of Iowa. Two of Eleanor's daughters were still living in San Diego, California in 1941 -- Virginia McPherson Throne, 76, and Fannie McPherson Capelle, 87 years old. Eleanor Galland lived to be 94.

Washington Galland became one of the prominent men of his day in Lee County. He spent most of his life in Montrose. As a lawyer, a member of the state legislature, a captain of the Grand Army of the Republic, he was active in Masonic and other lodge work, was a staunch Republican, and an Episcopalian in his religious faith. His was an eventful career, and he had an intimate knowledge of many of the important events which fashioned the history of Iowa.

James W. Campbell became a pilot on the river. This business seemed one for which he was peculiarly fitted, and subsequently he commanded some of the finest boats plying the Mississippi. After abandoning the river, he engaged extensively in buying and selling grain. Campbell was married and had three sons. Most of the latter years of his life were spent in Fort Madison.



## CHAPTER 6

### A MIGRATORY COUNTY SEAT

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For 18 years the seat of justice in Lee County went begging for a home, no spot could be found for its location that pleased all the county at one and the same time. Many insisted that the county seat should be centrally located, but whenever a central point was found, it too was unsuitable. So the envy and bickerings rose and fell until they were smoothed out by halving the seat of justice between Fort Madison and Keokuk.

On January 18, 1838, the Governor of the Territory of Wisconsin approved an act which provided that the county seat should be at Fort Madison. Here the early sessions of court were held and the principal business of the county transacted. But the settlers farther back from the Mississippi began to complain that the county seat was too far away from the center of the county. In response to public sentiment, a commission was appointed at a session of the legislature of 1840, to investigate the conditions in Lee County and to recommend a location for a permanent seat of government.

The commission selected a spot at the center of the county, and the name "Franklin" was chosen for the new seat of justice. The site was surveyed and platted and a sale of lots in Franklin was advertised for Monday, July 13, 1840, but there is no record to be found of the sale of these lots. The dissatisfaction was so great that buyers hesitated to invest their money. This feeling increased until an act was passed submitting the whole matter to a vote of the people at an election to be held the second Monday in March, 1841.

The people of Fort Madison immediately passed an ordinance to appropriate \$8,000 for the erection of a courthouse in Fort Madison, provided that the county seat should be located there. Not only was the ordinance passed, but the money was actually turned over to the county treasurer and, as a further guarantee, a number of citizens filed a bond for \$16,000, twice the amount donated, guaranteeing its payment. In addition to this, an ex-treasurer of Fort Madison certified that \$5,000 had been received from the sale of town lots, which sum was proposed should be added to the public building fund. Other public spirited citizens purchased lots for the location of the courthouse, paying as high as \$560 each, then sold them to the county for a consideration of one dollar a lot, thus bringing the total building fund up to \$13,559 before the election was held. This "pernicious activity," as some of the opponents of Fort





## A Migratory County Seat

Madison expressed it, had its effect on election day. Although no location received a majority, Fort Madison led, and led again at a second election held April 19, 1841.

Still the argument was not settled. While Fort Madison was erecting its courthouse, the advocates of Franklin and West Point petitioned the legislature, asking that the question be submitted again to the people. Fort Madison remonstrated but to no avail.

On January 13, 1843, the Governor approved an act "to relocate the seat of justice of Lee County." Three commissioners were appointed to visit Lee County and select such a location as to them seemed best, "taking into consideration the future as well as the present population."

They reported their choice to be the land upon which West Point was located. A noteworthy number of West Point citizens agreed to build a courthouse to be 45 by 50 feet in size, constructed of brick with a stone foundation, and to be completed by September 1, 1844. It was to be given to the county "in consideration of the commissioners' locating the county seat at West Point."

The courthouse at Fort Madison was to be sold at public auction and as much of the money as had been donated by citizens of Fort Madison refunded to the town. But the sale never occurred. The people of West Point kept faith and built a courthouse on the site of the new location, and thus Lee County had two courthouses.

In the summer of 1843 public feeling fomented a movement to have the county divided. The question was put to a vote but division of the county was defeated, and the county seat fight began all over again.

There were angles in the situation not revealed by the outward facts. Rivalries had sprung up in the county that were eating away its unity. One bonfire was kindled by the resentment of the small communities toward the superior attitude of the big town. "It is not fair", the countryside swore hotly, "that just because a town is big it should grab for every honor." The village could give its county a better seat of government just because it could make that its whole interest. The big town countered with, "Why should our citizens be forced to trek into the backwoods to settle government business?"

August, 1843, saw Lee County again warring at the polls to decide where to move its seat of government this time. Six places entered the contest: Fort Madison, West Point, Franklin, Keokuk, Montrose, and Charleston. But once again the vote went to Fort Madison, but not a majority vote. A



decisive election was set for the first Monday in September, with Fort Madison, West Point, and Franklin the three contestants. The ensuing campaign was short but bitter, made tempestuous with oratorical recriminations, torchlight processions, fist fights, and enough flaming jealousy to set the river afire. Fort Madison won with a majority of 53 votes.

But the "Gem City" was not to hold its honor alone. A formidable rival to the south, Keokuk, stepped in and demanded half the laurels. Fort Madison might wear the air of conqueror to the rest of the county, but superiority to Keokuk was an absurdity -- Keokuk was older and larger, and famed as the Gate City to the West. There would have to be two seats of government.

In 1847, therefore, a law was passed creating certain courts in Keokuk which would have concurrent jurisdiction with those at Fort Madison. Part of the litigation arising in the county would be adjudicated at Keokuk. Offices would be maintained there by the treasurer, recorder, and clerk. One year the county officers would direct affairs at Fort Madison, their deputies at Keokuk; the next year the order would be reversed. Litigants could sue in either the Keokuk or the Fort Madison court, and judgments rendered in one district would be also a lien in the other district. All land south of the half-breed line would be recorded at Keokuk; the rest of the county at Fort Madison. Two court-houses and a double set of county officers might set an economist aghast, but Lee County knew that division was the way to union.

A last arrow of protest, however, was hurled from the countryside March 3, 1856, when 2,238 qualified voters asked for an election to vote upon the question of removing the county seat from Fort Madison to Charleston. History is silent as to the election, but in 1941 Fort Madison was still the county seat of Lee County.





## CHAPTER 7

### THE HONEY WAR PERIOD

An almost forgotten civil disturbance, the "Honey War", took place in 1839 between Clark County, Missouri, and Van Buren and Lee counties, Iowa, over a 12-mile tract of wild timber west of Keokuk. In 1816 a Government surveyor had marked the northern boundary of Missouri with mounds, stakes, and blazed trees, and the rapids of the Des Moines River were one of the landmarks. Then, in 1837, Missouri began remarking the line. In searching for the rapids in the river the commissioners found the ripples in the great river bend near Keosauqua and assumed these to be the "Rapids" of the Des Moines River named in the Act of Congress defining the boundaries in 1820. In Iowa the ripples had not been thought of as rapids until they were so called by the Missouri commissioners. Out of this dispute various angry issues leaped into conflict.

The presence of bee trees in vast numbers on the area gave the struggle its name, but the real issue at stake was not the honey, prized as it was by the pioneers. This absurd little skirmish foreshadowed the larger issue which two decades later was to plunge the North and the South into war. Some of the pioneers on the disputed area held slaves, and it was known that these would be freed if Iowa gained possession of the territory.

In August 1838, the Sheriff of Clark County, while collecting taxes on the disputed ground, was taken prisoner by the Iowa militia -- a virtual declaration of war. In November, Governor Boggs of Missouri called out the militia, ordering Gen. David Wilcock, a Palmyra man in command of the fourteenth militia district, and Gen. O. H. Allen of Lewis County to take the field. Two thousand two hundred militia-men and volunteers -- more than 50 of them from Palmyra -- were on the march for Iowa shortly afterward.

With equal spirit the Iowa free soldiers rushed to arms at the call of Governor Lucas and moved out to hold the debated ground. On December 12, the Marion County men started for Waterloo in Clark County, Missouri.

Pitifully unequipped to withstand the rigors of winter, the men found their sufferings the first night almost unbearable. They were beset by rain and snow and the huge log fires they built barely saved them from freezing. Another day's march through slushy roads and icy winds brought them to a second encampment as bleak as the first.



## The Honey War Period

To this camp at Waterloo on Troublesome Creek came a peace delegation. Colonel Thomas L. Anderson, F. H. Edmundson, and S. M. Grant, Missouri diplomats, met with William Patterson, J. D. Payne, and L. B. Hughes in a peace parley. The conference resulted in an agreement to rest the controversy with the Federal Government for settlement.

Disgusted at this inglorious end to their warlike sortie, the Marion County men hung up two haunches of venison labeled respectively Governor Boggs and Governor Lucas and proceeded to fill them with the bullets intended for the enemy on the field of battle. Then, with their coats turned wrong side out, they marched back to Palmyra singing the derisive "Honey War Song," the composition of a Palmyra rhymester.

The Lewis County men manifested more bitterness. They held a convention at Monticello at which they hotly denounced the governors, the peace council and everyone else responsible for squashing their warlike enterprise and depriving them of the right to settle their dispute for themselves in a manner befitting the warriors they had become.

On February 13, 1849, the United States Supreme Court awarded the Honey lands to Iowa. The award was made on the recommendation of a Capt. Robert E. Lee, who had made the survey in 1837, and who 25 years later was to lead southern armies in the Civil War.

Even the Civil War did not settle the boundary problem. The capricious Des Moines River, as though never satisfied with things as they were, was forever changing its course: Chapter 304, Section 1, of the Acts of the Forty-eighth General Assembly, following the whimsical boundary, states that the "present course" of the river is the boundary and shall remain so, and relinquishes all lands to the south and west. The Missouri legislature, in section one of a corresponding act, relinquishes all lands north and east. The boundary compromise remained a laughable reminder to friendly states of the struggles of yesteryear.

### The Mormons

Early in 1838, while the Mormons were still living at Far West in Caldwell County, Missouri, the Mormon Church purchased 20,000 acres of land lying in Lee County, intending to build up its holdings. This land, directly adjoining the Mississippi River, was bought chiefly from Dr. Isaac Galland, a wealthy land owner in what was then the Territory of Wisconsin. It was directly across from the site of Nauvoo, Illinois, and included Galland Grove, Keokuk, and Montrose, also known as the Half-Breed Tract. A year later, after it





had all become part of the Territory of Iowa, Dr. Galland wrote to Governor Lucas asking if the Saints might "dwell safely in Iowa", for they had been driven from Ohio and Missouri, and a third state might continue the banishment. But Governor Lucas replied that he knew of no authority by which they could be driven out if they lived in a peaceful manner. Thus encouraged, about 100 families settled in Lee County. These people were the first Mormon residents in Iowa and their settlement within its limits began in 1839. The community established was known as the "Stake of Zarahemla."

When the Saints were entirely driven out of Far West, Missouri, several thousand of them went through Keokuk and up to Muscatine. The route they took became known as the Old Trail, still visible in 1942 though no written record was kept of any landmarks. Shortly afterward a number of them returned to the Stake of Zarahemla and lived there for several years. This community served as a refuge for Joseph Smith, Jr., and his associates during their persecution by Illinois mobs.

### The Danites

Life was needlessly complicated for early Lee County settlers through activities of the Danites, self-styled Destroying Angels, a band of Mormons who preyed upon Gentiles (as all non-Mormons were called) as well as on their own sect, and formed a vigilante group of the early Mormon church.

The name Danite was taken from the scriptural quotation, Genesis 49, 17: "Dan shall be a serpent by the way; an adder in the path that biteth the horses' heels, so that his rider shall fall backwards." Its first leader, it is said, was D. W. Patton, appointed by the prophet Joseph Smith, who named him Captain Fear-not, claiming that he had been directed to do so by the revealed will of God. Patton was killed, however, in a fight with the citizens' militia of Missouri. William Hickman was then appointed to be the new Captain Fear-not and time developed the fact that a more cool, cunning, devilish disposition had rarely before been lodged in human form. According to his own confession, Hickman was a thief and a murderer; stealing horses seemed to be in his daily stride. Many times he was caught with one in his possession and was arrested and thrown into jail in Lee County.

The Danite Band at one time numbered about 2,000. They went in search of plunder widely; traveled by steamboat on the river and every other way, and in any disguise that served their purpose, oftentimes carrying tools or utensils



of their trades or pretended trades. The members of the band were bound together by the most secret and terrible of oaths and betrayal was certain death.

### The Mennonites-Amish in Lee County

The Mennonites-Amish in Lee County are members of a Church that numbers more than 400,000 adherents scattered through many parts of the world. The Iowa Mennonites are the descendants of the Swiss Anabaptist Brethren of the Reformation period. In 1536, this group that had separated from the Roman Catholic Church because of disbelief in some of its practices, had for a leader a priest in northern Germany named Menno Simon. From him came the group called Mennonites. About this time friction arose among the members over the attitude of the Brethren toward those of their number who had fallen into sin. Some argued that there should be neither social nor business relations with the erring. Finally those holding rigidly to the letter of this law of "shunning" separated from the Mennonites and took as leader a fiery young bishop, Jacob Amman of Alsace, calling themselves Amish in his honor. Thus there came to be two wings of the sect -- Mennonite and Amish.

A large majority of the Amish, first settlers in Lee County, were from Butler County, Ohio, and nearly all of them were originally from Alsace-Lorraine or southern Germany. Economic conditions explained in part their migration to America, as it likewise was the reason for their settlement in Iowa where land was cheaper than in Ohio. Among the earliest settlers were John Rogie, Christian Kinsinger, Christian Werey (or Werie), Andrew Hauder, Christian Raber and Adam Fordemwalt, who came into the county in 1839 or 1840.

The Amish settlement in Lee County attracted an unusually large number of preachers; Christian Raber was the first one. The Raber family lived on a farm between Charleston and Franklin, Christian was a short and heavy-set man with a long white beard that fascinated the Indians. They became his special friends, making his home their headquarters whenever they traveled through that section of the county. One attraction of the Raber home to them was the delicious pumpkin butter made by Mrs. Raber, which she shared with her Indian guests. The Indians would file into her cabin and stand along the walls of the room to receive liberal helpings of bread spread thickly with pumpkin butter. These they ate with loud approval and a stamping of their moccasined feet on the ground.

The most influential preacher in the Lee County colony was Elder Joseph Goldsmith, who brought his family to Iowa





from Ohio in 1846. They bought tickets at Cincinnati, Ohio, for steamboat transportation to Keokuk, but when the Mississippi began to freeze they were unloaded at Hannibal, Missouri. From this point they took the wagon trail to a two-room log house near St. Paul in Lee County. All their belongings were conveyed by a one-horse wagon, which likewise carried the members of the family who could not walk.

The exact date of the organization of the Lee County Amish Church is not known, but it was so near the time of the arrival of Elder Goldsmith that his descendants insist the organization was brought about by him. Old records give the date at 1845. Goldsmith became the leader of the group in 1846 and continued as such until his migration to Henry County in 1855.

The largest membership of the church was 50, in 1855. Other settlers followed the first families, but at that time they began to move away, some to Henry County, others to Davis County, and to points in Missouri and Illinois. The church organization was not dissolved, however, until 1870. When the Amish Church started to break up, some of its members who remained in the community began to attend Mennonite services, and a few transferred their church membership to this group. There was little religious fellowship between the Amish and the Mennonite groups, because the differences of opinion that had separated them 150 years before were still present, but these were slowly disappearing in the face of the common problem of the frontier. One great unifying force was the need to find husbands and wives, for in no other groups could they find such similarity of thought and custom.

### The Mennonites

The first Mennonites to settle in Iowa came to West Point Township in Lee County, in the fall of 1839. There was only one family in this first migration. John C. Krehbeil, his wife, and his little son, John J. Krehbeil. By the year 1845 there were enough new settlers of this faith to organize a church in the new country. The beginnings of the church, however, were set in tragedy.

Henry Leisy had come from Ohio in 1844 and built a log cabin on the bank of Sugar Creek a mile or so from Franklin, then returned to Ohio to marry the daughter of the Mennonite preacher John Miller (Mueller). The next spring Leisy and his bride, Preacher Miller, and various others came to Leisy's home. Miller, born in Bavaria, was an old and saintly man and the Mennonites eagerly looked to him to begin their first church organization. He was to preach to them on the day of Pentecost, May 11, 1845, but during the



previous night, he and Leisy were murdered in their home on Sugar Creek by two robbers. (These were the Hodges brothers). They were hanged for the crime the following summer in Burlington. So bitter was the feeling that a foretaste of death was given to the criminals, each being made to sit on his coffin during the ride to the gallows through the city streets.

The death of Miller stopped church organization plans for several years, and it was not until 1849 that another attempt was made to form a Mennonite congregation. It was decided that a meeting house should be built, and in spite of the lack of cash, they erected a log structure, the members contributing labor and material. Mrs. Christopf Schenk, a daughter of the murdered John Miller, had presented the church with a half acre of land for the building site.

This church, the first to be built by the Mennonites in Iowa, seated 30 people and was located one and a half miles east of what was later the town of Franklin, and less than a half mile east of the cabin where the saintly John Miller had been murdered. Because it was built in the woods, the log church was usually known as the "Busch Kirche." In later years, after its abandonment as a meeting house, the church fell into ruins. But in 1941 the foundation stones still marked its location, and a few tombstones lying by a hedge to the west indicated the burial place of some of its first members.

A Mennonite Church was dedicated in West Point in 1863, although for years prior to that the Mennonites had held services there. In 1941 this church was still standing on its original location, but for a long time, just how long is not known, it had served as a granary.

A new inrush of Mennonites from Germany arrived in Lee County in 1852 and settled in Franklin Township. With the coming of these families a larger house of worship was needed and a stone church with a basement for use as a schoolroom was built two miles northwest of Donnellson. At an early date the church became known as Zion Church, a name it retained. During the early years of the church there were four ministers in its membership, from which Henry Ellenberger was selected as the first pastor. In 1861 Christian Showalter was chosen by lot for the ministry. He preached his first sermon on Christmas Day, 1861, and during the next year was ordained to the office of minister, in which capacity he served for 42 years. Not only was Showalter the preacher, he was also the school teacher of the German church school which was held in the basement. Under his liberal leadership a beginning was made in cooperation among the various Mennonite churches. He was especially





interested in extending the activities of the church. For many years, before he could persuade his congregation to observe Christmas, (which Zion did in 1890 with a tree), he had a Christmas program every year on the day following Christmas. To each child at this time he would present a Christmas story booklet and three home-baked cookies.

Of the three Mennonite churches in Lee County, only the Zion Church in Donnellson remained by 1942. At the close of the nineteenth century such large groups of members of the Franklin and West Point churches had moved to Kansas and Illinois that these congregations passed out of existence.

The church at Donnellson celebrated its seventy-fifth year in October 1926. There was an all-day Sunday meeting in which three choirs sang -- the active choir of 1926, the choir of 25 years previously, and the choir of 50 years before this anniversary.

The Mennonites-Amish took for their watchword the Biblical command of "Be ye not conformed to the world." This they interpreted to mean that the Christian's sense of values, his interests, his purpose in life, must all be different from those of the unbeliever. The outward expression of this command took the form of extreme simplicity in dress and home furnishings: the plain black bonnet and tight-waisted, full-skirted dress of the women, the absence of all adornment -- even to the wedding ring; the full-crowned, wide-brimmed black hat of the men, the hook-and-eye fastenings, the "front fall", round-legged trousers, the sober square beard, and the absence of a mustache. The houses, built for convenience only, held furniture constructed for use, with no embellishments. The walls bore no pictures. The church was a box with no spire, the worship without musical instrument. The sermons were recitals of Bible verses and their applications. All of these restrictions meant the building up of a strongly knit community group that had a social life distinct from that of the surrounding neighborhood. The Mennonites did not vote, did not go to law to settle disputes, did not enter military service. Their way of life, they emphasized, was the way of peace.

While the costumes of the Mennonite-Amish changed little during the last century, some amount of liberal thought gradually seeped into the Iowa communities, until 1942 saw the churches varied from the most conservative ("Old Order of Amish") to the most liberal ("General Conference Mennonites"). The latter remained conservative in religion and personal habits, but adopted the newest machinery in their farming. This progress came from the belief of the Mennonites that agriculture was the field in which they could make a special contribution to humanity. And their farms have gone far in indicating this ideal.



### The Anti-Horse-Thief Association

Toward the end of the Civil War Iowa found itself a victim of the war-time lawlessness that was sweeping the entire country like a prairie fire. Horse and cattle theft across the Iowa-Missouri line assumed such proportions that the law was unable to cope with it.

To assist civil officers in the enforcement of the laws, to protect the rights of the citizens, and to bring malefactors to justice, a body of Missourians organized themselves under the name of the "Anti-Horse-Thief Association."

The Grand Order, as it was called, was started in the month of September, 1863, when a group of the best citizens of several counties in north Missouri met at LuRay, Clark County in that state, and framed the Constitution and by-laws of the Association, adjourning with the understanding that another meeting would be held at Millport, Knox County, Missouri the following October.

At the October meeting, as scheduled, the Iowa counties of Lee, Davis, and Van Buren sent delegates of their best citizens. These, after examining the Constitution and by-laws, adopted them and joined the organization. That was the birth of the Anti-Horse-Thief Association in Lee County. A society of this character had operated in Washington township, Lee County, since the year of 1858, and after the association was formally organized, the Washington Township organization was incorporated with the main order.

The object and purpose of the Association was not actually to take law enforcement into its own hands, but to help civil officers in their enforcement of the law. The name Anti-Horse-Thief Association was used only because horse stealing headed the list of crimes. The society quickly branched out, helping officers of the law to bring criminals of every character to justice. Its influence was felt in the courtroom as well as afield.

The Anti-Horse-Thief Association spread into many states, growing to almost 2,000 lodges with a total membership of over 50,000. They met in secret and held secret ceremonials after the fashion of all secret orders.

As the western territory filled up, with changes in economic conditions, and the establishment of courts and regular legal proceedings for the protection of the public, the once powerful "Anti" organization, having served its purpose, began to dwindle in membership and importance. It never passed completely out of existence, however, as scattered lodges throughout the Midwest still maintained their charters and a sizeable membership even in 1942. In some





sections they remained in force merely for sentimental reasons. In other, more isolated communities the "Antis" continue to function as a law-enforcement agency as in their more active earlier days.

### The Squatters' Club

The Squatters' Club was the early settlers' protection against the hazards that might deprive them of their homesteads. After Congress had the county surveyed at the termination of the Indian title, land offices were set up at Burlington and Dubuque, and the lands ordered sold to the highest bidders.

The settlers, realizing that they could obtain legal title only by Government sale, (the first of which was at Burlington in 1838) made no attempt to substitute what was known as "squatters' title" for the legal form, except as a temporary substitute called a provisional title. The price demanded and paid for such a provisional title represented, first of all, the right of priority of purchase from the Government; second, the increase in value of the property by reason of favorable location and the growing demand for land; and third, the improvements that had been made upon it. Sometimes the sum of the values of a holding was greater than the Government price.

The Squatters' Club was the chief agency of the agreement for mutual protection in the execution of this provisional system of transfer. Membership was limited to proved holders of claims upon Government land or town lots, either the original settlers or those who had bought land from them. The organization had many powers within its province and its members were bound to it by a solemn oath. It acted as arbiter in such disputes as might arise between members concerning claims upon other than their already recorded parcels. The members were pledged to protect one another in the tenure of their approved claims, in the transfer of claims should they desire to sell, and against overbidding at the Government sale. They also protected one another, as far as possible, in cases where ruinous interest was charged by the "land sharks" to every poor squatter who had to borrow money to eke out the payment of Government price for his land.

For land sales, the club prepared engrossed copies of its list of members with the legal description of each member's claim opposite his name. A public bidder was then appointed by the club, who, with this approved list in hand, and in the presence of the settlers assembled at the sale, should bid off each parcel or lot in the name of its recognized claimant at the same instant that it was offered by



the Register. No other bids were allowed, and even the claimant himself, if he were present, was required to remain silent. When the hour for the sale arrived, the Register took his stand at an open window facing the yard within which many settlers and citizens were assembled. The club's bidder had a small stand erected in full view of the assembly and close to the window where the Register was standing, each having his list before him. These lists duplicated each other exactly because they had been carefully prepared the day before the sale so that there might be no confusion while the sale was in progress. The sale began by the Register's offering for sale a parcel of land, reciting its understood descriptive formula, which was followed by the instant response of the club's bidder, who, in a distinct voice, named the claimant and the minimum price. The register at once accepted the bid and the entry was checked off on both lists. As there was no waiting for higher bids, the sales were rapidly and almost perfunctorily made. An outsider could get in a higher bid if he spoke fast, but the answer with a hickory stick was twice that fast.

Once when an outsider did risk an overbid, he had hardly a chance to speak before he was knocked down by hickory canes, which many of the settlers then carried. His intention had been suspected and the men were ready for him. He was not quite killed, but did lose all interest in Lee County real estate. Had he chosen to make trouble, he could have, but the Register neatly obviated an argument by ignoring his bid and instantly accepting that of the club's bidder. Later when the Register was questioned concerning the overbid, he said he had heard no bid other than that of the club's bidder.





## CHAPTER 8

### THE LEE COUNTY FAIRS

Lee County was fair-conscious several years before Iowa became a State. The fair movement began at West Point July 17, 1841, when a group of 150 farmers met to form an Agricultural Society for the county. Here were shown informally "some of the finest of the Horned Durham breed" of cattle in the whole region -- an exhibition which has gone down in the records as a fair -- probably the first held west of the Mississippi River, as well as the first in Lee County and in Iowa.

The Lee County Agricultural Association, formed at that time, held the first official and recognized fair in September of the following year, near Keokuk. It lasted three days, and may have been the first fair to enforce the ruling that every animal exhibited must be worth at least as much as the premium for which it was shown.

On November 1, 1851, a number of Keokuk people inspired by G. W. Edmondson, publisher of a local agricultural paper, arranged for a fair to be held the following fall. The scheduled exhibition took place at Keokuk October 13 and 14, 1852, in the old Iowa Medical College, Third and Palean streets.

The Society decided on more extensive promotion for the next showing, in early October 1853, at Keokuk. In the weeks prior to the fair Judge Thomas W. Clagett, President of the Lee County Agricultural Society, delivered speeches at 13 different places -- schoolhouses and other town meeting centers, and personally offered a prize of \$50 for the best ten acres of corn grown in Lee County. (The required area was later reduced to five acres because of unfavorable corn-growing weather.) Keokuk was the scene of the next county fair, in 1854.

Every form of gambling and gaming was prohibited on the fairgrounds, and it was announced that "pickpockets will be shot first and tried afterwards." It was ruled, too, that any quarrels or disputes arising at the fair may not be settled by the disputants on the premises.

One of the highlights of the sports events was a boys' foot race in which, noted a local reporter, "some of the boys were barefooted, and one, A. J. Craig, was bare otherwise." He carried off the \$10 prize, wearing only "a pair of tight fitting drawers."



The official Fourth Annual Lee County Fair went back to West Point in 1855. Billed as "The Fair of the Empire County", it was held in the public square where it was enclosed by a fence and, according to the Keokuk Valley Whig (later the Daily Gate City), "protected from curious eyes and trespassing feet" by a curtain of cotton cloth. The college building in the center of the square was described as "just the thing" for the display of fruits, vegetables, and household articles. Fair visitors were welcomed everywhere as guests by the residents of West Point, but at the regular tavern accommodations were bad and prices sky high.

In 1856, after West Point citizens had pledged \$500 to fit up the fairgrounds -- ten acres donated by Messrs. Jones and R. Guseka -- the Society voted to make the town the official and permanent site of the Lee County Fair. From that year until 1870, the event was held there annually on September 28, 29, and 30, or thereabouts.

Meanwhile at Keokuk in 1868 a "Horse and Mechanical Fair" had been set up from October 6 to 8, inclusive. Not much is known of the mechanical side of it, but of the horses, some notations survive. Early arrivals engaged at once in "hoss" talk. Local newspapers graphically described every heat of the races, naming each racer and his relative prominence.

Single buggy races were contested by Amos and Kangaroo. The excitement started as Amos fled into the brush when halfway around the track, leaving the long-legged, leaping Kangaroo to finish (as he had many times before) in solitary grandeur, the winner of the \$40 purse. Race track patrons were never troubled about which horse would win when Kangaroo was an entry. Although his leaps over the course might not quite fit into any classification of racing gaits, bettors on his prowess could rest assured that his sudden leaps and bounds would frighten to flight or a standstill all his competitors. Kangaroo's racing always drew a crowd.

In the running events enthusiastic backers shouted respectively for Rowdy, Black Chief, Troublesome, and Cottonpicker, but they might as well all have roared together for Cottonpicker, long, rangy, spider-legged Cottonpicker, because he won every race. Chaos might have resulted had he and Kangaroo raced in the same class.

There was a fast mule race, with a \$25 award, and a slow mule race with a \$5 prize. The fast mules lost time by balking, first alternately then all together. One wild-eyed fellow escaped from the track, and tore through the brush, his frosty-haired Negro rider's shouts of "Whoa dar!" rapidly growing fainter in the distance. The slow mule contest had only three entries, two of which, at "Time called!",





determinedly squatted on their haunches a few yards from the starting place, the mood for rest having come upon them with the Negro rider's first tatoo on their backsides. Much frenzied adjuration with stick and voice finally got mule number three to a snail's gallop, and in "time-and-a-half" he reached the winner's mark.

Darling of the "Variety Racing" was Cotton Ball, a slim, white filly, as "chock full of temperament as she was of gaits." She wouldn't run at all unless there was plenty of competition, whereupon, in order to win, she tried out each of her five gaits. When she could feel the hot breath of a rival coming up on her flank, a special frantic gait called "swallow's flight" usually kept her in the lead. Tucking those long dainty legs under her, she would give a series of "shooting star dives," and the pole was hers. Then, for good measure, heartened by the enthusiastic shouting of her name, Cotton Ball would turn in a mad whirl, and run around the track again, usually passing the judges' stand with the last laggards of the preceding race. The "little black skeeter bug" jockey on her back, "jes couldn't do nothin' with her, Boss." But the crowd loved her caprice and there was always a special purse for variety gaits that went by acclaim to Cotton Ball. Her every laurel was a testimonial to the Lee County sense of humor, without which she could never have run at all.

Fort Madison had become the favored fair site in 1870 after residents of that town had prepared fairgrounds and erected exhibition buildings, also offering other unnamed inducements. The "Twentieth Annual Fair of Lee County" was held there September 26 through 29, 1871, and was rescheduled through 1874. That year, competition with the Iowa State Fair at Keokuk proved too strong, and a published report stated that the county fair should never have been attempted under the circumstances.

Beginning in 1871, a district fair had been held at Keokuk for three consecutive seasons, then was replaced by State exhibitions until 1887. The gathering that year was long remembered as a "carnival of heat and dust." Temperatures ranged from 94 to 97, no rain had fallen for several weeks, and teams had to haul water day and night for thirsty livestock, and to dampen the race track. Dining places, refreshment stands, and side-shows had to be abandoned because of the thick gray clouds which cloaked everything in a blanket of dust. However, the crowds maintained their enthusiasm and the fair scored a success.

The official county fair lapsed from 1874 to 1878, when it was revived at Donnellson, as being nearer the geographical center of the county than its rivals. It was not,



however, put to actual use until after 1878, when the Lee County Fair was held regularly at Donnellson. In 1941 it was still considered one of the leaders of its class.

In January 1869 the Iowa Agricultural Board favored Keokuk as the site for the Iowa State Fairs of 1869 and 1870, and for this reason the Union Agricultural and Stock Association of Lee County secured 70 acres of land about two miles northeast of the Keokuk business section. The fairs for those two years were subsequently awarded to Keokuk and the construction of building began in earnest. These were many and varied. Water was abundantly supplied by large artificial ponds, wells, cisterns, and a natural spring.

The first Iowa State Fair was held at the new grounds from September 14 through 18, 1869. The 78 exhibits included everything from milch cows to musical instruments and from sorghum to sewing machines. The livestock exhibits, divisions A (horses and mules) and B (cattle) had a large and varied representation. Premiums were lavishly awarded. Only a few sheep were entered, but the hog pens were filled with grunting and squealing Berkshires, Poland Chines, Chester Whites, and other breeds. The poultry exhibit was weak, and interest centered mainly around specimens of Brahmas, Spanish Blacks, and some white pheasants.

All types of farm machinery were shown; exhibits of woods, textiles, metals, printing and book binding; grains, seeds, flowers, fruit, vegetables, and wines; every art of housewifery from jam to bed quilts; sculpture, taxidermy, chemical products, photography, models of boats and dams, plus a host of other things.

September 14, activities began at the fair at 9 a. m. with a plowing match in the field and a trotting race on the track. Patrons thrilled to trotting races, running races, trials of buggy horses, single and paired, work teams and draft horses in tests of speed and endurance, and cattle displays on the track both morning and afternoon. Livestock judging and exhibitions rounded out the program for a solid five-day festival of enjoyment for stock exhibitors and fans.

Great crowds milled around the exhibits. Sculpture by John Bawden of Keokuk, and a bust of Lincoln by William Greenland of Des Moines received special praise. Long lines of wagons and buggies clogged the roads from every direction leading to Keokuk, marking the fair's huge success.

The fair fans got an extra treat when a spirited team of horses hitched to a wagon staged a spectacular runaway down Johnson Street. Amid shouting, barking and chasing, the snorting team left an empty wagon slammed up against a





"slaunchwise" telephone pole -- luckily nobody was hurt. It was an exciting exhibition, but not on the schedule, nor even on the grounds.

A newspaper reporter of this period noted that at this fair one of the old, pioneer stagecoaches of bygone days was seen in operation. Its ancient panels were embellished with the announcement, "For the Fair-Grounds -- Only 25 cents."

The fair of 1870 was still bigger and better. Keokuk's close proximity to neighboring states and the cheap transportation facilities of both railroads and steamboats made it easy of access and aroused active competition among those bringing in exhibits. The receipts swelled to the largest sum so far reached in the history of the State Agricultural Society.

When the fair came to Keokuk in 1874, the stage was set with perfect September weather and the fine facilities Keokuk had provided to make the fair a success. And people did respond. Visitors began to arrive at daybreak in all types of vehicles from mule-drawn carts to elegant carriages. Excursion boats and trains brought hundreds from far and near points in Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. The turnpike on the Illinois shore was a solid flowing line between Hamilton and the bridge; both regular and special trains on the railroad were jammed with eager crowds, and steamboats, barges, flatboats, and canoes swung up or down the river laden with passengers for the fair. By noon the grounds were a swarming, surging mass of humanity. Along the board fence there was barely standing room. A single day of this fair brought an attendance of 25,000.

In 1875 the State Fair was again held at Keokuk, equally as successful as in 1874. Material equipment was increased and the number of exhibits enlarged, while the spectators numbered at least 10,000 more than the preceding year.



## CHAPTER 9

### LEE COUNTY IN THE CIVIL WAR

Only echoes of the Civil War reached most Iowa towns, but when Keokuk became Iowa's gateway to the war, Lee County was almost at once plunged into belligerent activities. Over Keokuk's main street, macadamized with broken stone, companies of Iowa recruits paraded to the shrill notes of the fife and the roll of drums. Convalescent soldiers roamed restlessly, soldiers paced with measured steps beside the slow moving conveyances carrying the dead to the new National Cemetery at the edge of town; rebels captured at Shiloh and Pittsburg Landing marched to the prison; women and girls in hoopskirts picked their way across the dirt streets, carrying broths, jellies, books, or flowers to the soldiers in the six hospitals. Keokuk's citizens awoke daily to reveille sounding from Camp Ellsworth on the hill above the city. They knew the fear of invasion, for several skirmishes were fought within rifle sound. The rush and stir of a nation at war filtered into every community in the county.

The struggle to gain mastery of the Mississippi River surged through the countryside to the south of Keokuk. Many of the "tin-clad" and "cotton-clad" steamers, armored with light iron or baled cotton, had once been palatial passenger and pleasure boats. Altogether, the Government used 622 Mississippi steamers as fighting machines. Steamboats on the Mississippi played almost as important a part in preserving the Union as they had in developing it.

Keokuk was aware of war rumblings before the conflict broke out. Situated as the city was on the border of Iowa and Mississippi, where northern and southern sympathies clashed, it had long been a battleground of debate between northern and southern views.

The Underground Railway -- that system of secret cooperation among antislavery people for helping fugitive slaves to escape into Canada -- had one of its most active stations in Lee County.

One of the main routes of the "railroad" branched out from Salem in Henry County and passed through Denmark, Lee County. Most of the Negro fugitives were routed to Denmark from Salem, but there were a few who followed an unknown and little used route either from Farmington in Van Buren County or Keokuk in Lee County. Denmark was a Congregational stronghold; and its people, New England and Puritan in their background, were among the most active Underground Railroad agents. The Reverend Asa Turner, pastor of the Denmark Congregational Church, was the leader of these activities. He





openly condemned slavery, drawing the ire of only a few of his parishioners who thought he should stick to the Bible and let slavery alone. He and Edward Turner were the principal conductors.

Asa never turned the needy from his door whether they were black or white. Many fugitives owed their freedom to him, but few stories of what he really did have been preserved.

The few stories that are known of activities in Denmark indicate that most of the people in the village and the vicinity were in deep sympathy with the slaves. Among these who assisted in conducting fugitive Negroes was Dr. George Shedd who was said to have been bold and daring. Philip James, a young abolitionist, made baskets to sell in Burlington, but few knew that Negro fugitives were often concealed beneath the baskets. He often drove along the streets of Burlington making no attempt to sell his baskets until his contraband load had been safely sheltered. A story is also told of a fugitive who came to a house a few miles from Denmark to ask for shelter. He was concealed, and a short time later, his pursuers arrived at the house. They were immediately instructed to go in the opposite direction from the one the fugitive wanted to take. As soon as they were gone, the Negro was hurried to a safe hiding place in Denmark. At another time two of the fugitives, en route from Denmark to cross the Mississippi into Illinois, were placed in the bottom of a wagon box and covered with garden produce. As luck would have it, they crossed the river on the same ferry that their masters used, but the masters were never aware of it.

One devout member of Asa Turner's congregation was a most resourceful conductor who assisted many to safety. One Sunday morning, just as he was ready to start for church, word came that slave owners were hunting with bloodhounds a number of Negroes he had concealed in his home. Before leaving, he instructed his son, who was staying at home, to feed the hounds some biscuits he had made, if their masters visited the house. Not long afterward the dogs appeared at the back of the house, and the son fed them as his father had directed. It was their last meal: they died of poison not far from the house.

Because Denmark had been an active Underground Railroad Station and was hated by the Missouri slave holders, it was a marked town during the Civil War. Fear of guerilla raiders developed a strong Home Guard there. For that reason, perhaps, the raiders failed to visit the town at all.

President Lincoln's proclamation of war, April 4, 1861, brought the call for Iowa's first quota -- one regiment.



The people of the State were a little indignant that the Secretary of War required only one regiment when enough men to fill four were eager and ready to go.

In Keokuk the first war meeting was held on April 17, 1861, in Verandah Hall, to give the citizens' voluntary oath of loyalty. Hundreds repeated the words of fealty in voices that trembled with earnestness: "Casting aside all party differences, we do hereby pledge ourselves with all the means in our power to support the Government and flag of the United States, henceforth and until the present conflict is ended, and that we recognize in the present crisis but two parties -- patriots and traitors."

On April 18, the old Keokuk Guards were reorganized under the name of Union Guards with 30 members enrolled. On April 19 it was announced that Keokuk had been chosen as the point of embarkation for the Iowa troops going to the southern battlefield. On April 22, a meeting was held at the old Athenium on Second Street to provide aid for the families of volunteers. At this meeting Henry Strong presided and George W. McCrary (afterward Secretary of War, 1877-1880) and E. Jaegers, acted as secretaries. On April 23, the Keokuk Artillery and the Governor's Guards reorganized and tendered their services to Governor Kirkwood. April 24, 1861, a number of prominent citizens organized the Keokuk City Rifles, a notable organization that played a glorious part in the war. It was the Home Guard. Recruits joined the "Rifles" and from its training entered the army. Over 120 officers were commissioned from its ranks. On April 26 a recruiting office was opened in the Belkneps Building on Fourth Street.

After Keokuk had been designated as the rendezvous of the First Regiment, companies of volunteers began to arrive. On May 7, the whistle of the Hawkeye State brought a hurrying throng to the levee to greet the first three companies to arrive -- two from Dubuque and one from Davenport. With a final "Fall in", "Left face", "Right face", the companies, led by their mounted officers, marched up the hill, fifes shrilling, drums rolling, and flags flying. Keokuk soon had parades galore, for each incoming group paraded. On May 8, two companies from Muscatine and two from Burlington arrived; on May 9 those from Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, and Mount Pleasant. For some time the soldiers were quartered in the upper rooms of business buildings. This made army discipline difficult and shifted almost all the disciplinary authority to the shoulders of company officers.

To supply the Iowa troops with clothing and arms during the early months of the war was a difficult task. The first uniforms of the ten companies of Iowa volunteers accepted as a regiment were made from cloth bought by Ezekiel Clark of





Iowa City at Governor Kirkwood's own expense, and was made up by the ladies who formed local Soldiers' Aid Societies. The uniforms -- for those who had them -- were thus home-made by enthusiastic but unskilled hands. The cloth, very poor, thin, sleazy blue-gray satinette, was sent to the various towns from which the companies came. Although they were all of the same general style, each company had some distinguishing feature. The men from Burlington and Mount Pleasant wore uniforms trimmed with red flannel, while black felt hats turned up at the side and fastened with red, white and blue tin bull's eyes about the size of a sauce plate, marked the Davenport soldiers. The whole rig, from hat to brogans, cost \$8. An excerpt from Frank B. Wilkie, war correspondent for the Dubuque Herald and the New York Times gives a vivid picture of the tailoring by the volunteer seamstresses.

"A majority of the boys are able to get their pantaloons from the floor by buttoning the waist bands around their necks -- others accomplish this result by bringing the waist bands tight up under the arms and rolling them six or eight inches at the bottom.... a fellow has to take off his belts, then his coat, then ascend one story before he can reach his pockets, and after reaching them they are so deep that one has to take them off entirely before he can touch bottom. Each pocket will hold a shirt, a blanket, and even the wearer himself if at any time he finds such a treat necessary.

"And the coat fit almost as well as the pants. To be sure, half of them are two feet too large around the waist, and almost as much too small around the chest...

"In the cases of 15 or 20 of them, the top of the collar is but a trifle above the small of the wearer's back, and in the case of about as many more, the same article is a few inches above the head of their owners. The same collar also in some cases terminates beneath each ear, and in others it sweeps away around in a magnificent curve, forming a vast basin, whose rim is yards distant from the neck of its possessor. And the sleeves too, have here and there a fault, some are so tight under the arms that they lift one up as if he were swinging upon a couple of ropes that pass under his armpits. Others strike boldly out and do not terminate their voluminous course till a distance of several inches beyond the tips of his fingers, while still others conclude their journey after marching only an inch or so below the elbows."

The first uniforms hardly lasted till the soldiers reached Springfield, Missouri. The thin sleazy garments disintegrated so rapidly, especially behind, that many of the soldiers took flour sacks and made themselves aprons for



a rear guard. Governor Lyon, incensed at what he thought was a joke, ordered the soldiers to remove so "unsoldierly a decoration." But when he saw the immodest result of his command he quickly rescinded the order.

When blankets, hats, shoes, and uniforms had been provided for the companies of that first regiment there were still no guns. Finally Governor Kirkwood secured arms for the soldiers; poor affairs, but arms -- old fashioned brass mounted pieces known as "and-such-is-the-kingdom-of-heaven" guns because they kicked farther than they shot.

Some days later tents arrived, and Camp Ellsworth, the first Civil War Military camp in the State, named for Colonel Ellsworth of New York, was established in the north part of Keokuk.

The first recruited Iowa regiments were still in Keokuk when Stephen A. Douglas died in Chicago on June 3. The funeral procession for Douglas, in Keokuk, on June 11 was led by the Keokuk cavalry, the First, Second, and Third Regiments; then came the Mayor and City Council, the clergy, the day's orator, J. H. Craig, Esquire, the funeral car, and a long procession of mourners.

The first orders for troop movement came from General Lyon on June 13. A steamer took these first Iowa troops, a regiment of infantry, to Hannibal, Missouri.

In the State of Missouri both Union and Confederate recruits were being enlisted, for the Missourians were divided on the war question. "Sesesh" was the popular name for the Confederates because they favored secession from the Union. Because of the large number of adherents on both sides in Missouri, collisions between armed bodies of men were frequent.

The only shots to land on Iowa soil during the Civil War, however, were during what was called the Battle of Athens, Missouri, on August 5, 1861. Athens was located on the Des Moines River, 20 miles northwest of Keokuk. On August 1, some 35 tons of provisions including a quantity of muskets and ammunition, had been sent to Athens by the Des Moines Valley Railroad. Colonel David Moore was stationed here with about 500 volunteers, armed with every known style of gun. The Confederates heard of the shipment and determined to attack Athens and capture the supplies. They were said to number 1,500 men, under Col. Martin E. Green.

August 2, messengers arrived at Athens, bringing news of the "Sesesh" plans, and Sunday evening, August 4, another messenger rushed in with word that the onslaught was to be made the next day.





Before day dawned on Monday, the long roll of drums in Keokuk made soldier and citizen alike leap from their beds. An excited messenger had come by horse on the railroad to report the approach of rebel Green with his 1,500 secessionists to Athens, just across the river from Croton, Iowa. Not only was Athens in danger, but rumor said that it was the plan of the rebels to cross the river and pillage the countryside, after mopping up Athens, then to descend upon Keokuk and "sack it to a fare-you-well."

With frenetic haste Colonel MacDowell with three companies of the Sixth Iowa, and Colonel Worthington with five companies of the Fifth Iowa, set out for Athens. A brass six-pounder was hauled along, and enough provisions to stand a siege.

Colonel Green had planted two cannon on the bluff behind Athens at 5:30 on the morning of August 5 and opened fire while his infantry attacked the Moore forces. The cannon balls flew too high, however. Instead of hitting the enemy, they passed over the heads of the Union soldiers, crossed the river and struck the Croton bluff. It is said that the sound of the guns could be heard in Keokuk.

The greater part of the fighting took place in the cornfields around Athens. Colonel Moore's forces held their posts doggedly for a time, then charged the rebel forces, routing them. During the battle the Croton Home Guards and the Keokuk companies marched into a sugar camp on the river bank and fired across the river onto the Confederates in the cornfield, inflicting considerable loss. At two in the afternoon a secessionist detachment, bearing a white flag, asked opportunity to recover and bury their dead. The request was granted. That night outposts and guards were stationed and the troops slept on their arms. Though many false alarms stirred the camp, there was no battle. The next day, while the Athens Home Guards set out in pursuit of Colonel Green, the Keokuk soldiers returned. The Union losses in the battle of Athens were four killed, three wounded badly, and 20 wounded slightly. The Confederate losses were much more.

On August 9 the Sixth Regiment received its marching orders at Keokuk. When all the companies had assembled, the regiment marched to the dock, stepping to lively fife and drum music. More than 800 Iowa boys crossed the gangplank of the palatial War Eagle as bands on the shore played "The Pretty Little Girl I Left Behind Me," and people crowded close to wave and shout goodbye. The boat swung to the middle of the river in a roar of steam whistles, clanging bells, hurraing crowds, and shouting soldiers.



Mrs. Annie Turner Wittenmeyer, who organized the Keokuk Soldiers' Aid Society, had come to Keokuk in 1847, before there was a public school, and had almost at once opened a free school for the children of the poor. When war came, she immediately began the activities that later brought her the commendation from Gen. U. S. Grant: "No soldier on the firing line gave more heroic service than she rendered." Mrs. Wittenmeyer is credited with starting the first Soldiers' Aid Society, calling the first meeting of the women of Keokuk on Wednesday, May 8, 1861. On June 1, the women met at the Medical College for the stated purpose of forming a Volunteer Aid Society. By June 22, they were attempting to supply the soldiers with havelocks and sanitary supplies. Mrs. J. B. Howell, wife of the editor of the Keokuk Gate City, later became the president of the organization.

On October 13, 1861, Governor Kirkwood appointed 13 prominent citizens as members of a State Sanitary Commission, with Mrs. Wittenmeyer as agent. In 1862 Mrs. Wittenmeyer gained permission to visit the war hospitals of the Nation, and discovering the appallingly bad food served to the sick soldiers, she persuaded the authorities to experiment with diet kitchens in the hospitals. In spite of initial opposition, the idea worked out successfully, and by the close of the war there were more than 100 diet kitchens where such food as chicken broth, milk, tomatoes, jellies, gruels, tea, and vegetables supplemented the regular army fare. In May 1864, this work was made a part of the United States Christian Commission, and Mrs. Wittenmeyer resigned as State Sanitary Agent to organize and supervise the diet kitchens. The commission provided the maintenance and expenses of the women whom Mrs. Wittenmeyer chose as supervisors. Although the government furnished most of the supplies in these kitchens, additional foods, such as jellies and preserves, were furnished by private agencies.

While the boys in blue were at the front fighting the battles of their country, those who remained at home took thought for the soldiers and their families. Lee County issued a county war tax to pay each married man who volunteered for the war \$75 and each single man \$50. This tax was five and a half mills on the dollar, levied upon all taxable property of the county. The money was raised the most expeditious way, through the issuance of war notes to the amount of \$38,000 in sums from one to \$100. Each note was to bear interest at eight per cent, to become due in nine months from the date of sale and to be receivable in payment of the war tax.

Each man in the county was expected to buy for cash at least as many of these notes -- dollar for dollar -- as would pay his tax. Thus Lee County was enabled to raise her quota of volunteers without placing upon the shoulders of





## Lee County in the Civil War

her people a bonded debt, as was done in so many counties. The "war notes" were liberally taken up by the citizens and were redeemed in the payment of the War Tax, so that at no time was the debt burdensome.

Steamboat men had brought the news of the battle of Shiloh (April 6, 1862) up the river to Keokuk. The city dreaded to see the casualty lists for so many Iowa boys who had made their rendezvous in Keokuk had fought in that conflict.

It was a bright Sunday morning, April 19, 1862, when the first hospital ship, flying its yellow flag, was sighted across and down the river at Warsaw, Illinois. Church was dismissed and hundreds flocked to the levee to help the soldiers too ill to walk. This ship, the John Warner, in charge of Dr. J. C. Hughes, Jr. was the first of two ships dispatched to Keokuk with 1,900 wounded to arrive. The Governor Wood, the second ship, docked a half hour later. These large New Orleans boats carried the first wounded sent north from St. Louis. On April 23, the steamer D. A. January arrived with 300 more wounded. At once, in addition to Estes House, Leighton House, the Medical College, Central Building (old high school), the Rice Building, and the Simpson House were commandeered as hospitals. Two weeks later there were 293 patients in Estes House alone, and 37 soldiers had died. By July, 1862, there were still 1,500 patients in the hospitals; 617 had died, 189 of whom were from Iowa. Keokuk was the most important war hospital center of the Northwest.

The people of Keokuk were keenly aware of war with hundreds of convalescent soldiers at liberty, wandering through the streets, and with hundreds lying at the point of death in the hospital beds. They gladly furnished sheets, pillows, blankets, bandages, towels, handkerchiefs, bed-socks -- everything they could add to the comfort of the men. They replenished the hospital kitchens with crackers, eggs, butter, dried fruit, jellies, cordials, sugar, dried beef, green tea, tapioca, nutmegs, corn starch, and other foods that helped the sick soldiers to convalesce.

During the winter of 1863-64 farmers living near Keokuk donated 108 wagonloads of stove wood to keep the soldiers warm. Estes House alone, with 350 beds, consumed 500 cords.

There was a daily procession to the National Cemetery, established in Keokuk in September, 1861. By the end of 1863, 617 soldiers had been buried there. Rebel, Union, and Negro soldiers alike were interred within its acres. Almost the entire loyal male population was in the Government service, but many of the rest were in sympathy with the South. It must not be forgotten that had the Mason and Dixon Line



been drawn straight, Keokuk would have been south of that line. The differences in sentiment flared up now and then in lively clashes. Among the southern sympathizers were two whose behaviour Keokuk tolerated because they were old inhabitants. Thomas W. Claggett, a Maryland aristocrat, capitalist, lawyer, politician, and editor of the old Keokuk Constitution (daily), published scurrilous articles that reflected on the bravery of the northern soldiers and the Union cause. Boon companion and crony of Claggett was Henry Clay Dean, a striking political figure during the Civil War and the Reconstruction period following it. Both "Claggett and Dean lashed the Union cause and made particular ridicule of the Home Guards after the bloodless battle of Croton. They were warned repeatedly to keep still, but "Claggett "would have his say if an army stood at his door", and Dean, with no fear of bodily harm, rattled on as seditiously as ever. Then in February 1863 there occurred one of the most dramatic incidents of hospital life in the Gate City.

Convalescent soldiers in the hospital had secretly formed a plot which leaped into action on the night of February 19, 1863. Incensed at editorials in the Keokuk Constitution, a number of soldiers marched from the hospital down to the Constitution office, broke up the presses, and threw them, together with cases of type and all other contents, into the street. Drays were backed up to the curb and the wrecked presses loaded in.

At this point a squad of about 20 men, armed, equipped, and commanded by Lieutenant Ball, got wind of the affair and rushed double quick into Second Street where they formed a battle line a few paces from the printing office. Ball commanded the soldiers to disperse, but they paid no attention to him. He then ordered his men to load their guns, which they did, and as the last cartridge was rammed home and guns capped, his order rang out -- "Make ready." Then -- "Take aim."

Not a gun was raised. A convalescent soldier standing by Lieutenant Ball spoke in a low tone, "You give another order and off goes the top of your head." Another convalescent growled to the soldiers in general, "Move to shoot and you'll be filled with lead."

"Don't be afear'd, we won't shoot", was the laconic answer.

At this crisis the leader of the mob ordered his men to "fall in", "Right dress", "Left face", and on they marched toward Main Street, as orderly as if on dress parade, but the loaded drays went with them. A few minutes later presses and type were sinking in the deep waters of the Mississippi. Eventually the presses were fished out, and the Constitution resumed publication, its sentiments cooled for the duration of the war.





While the Constitution was being raided, another group seized the recalcitrant Henry Clay Dean, and dragged him through the streets until a convenient lamp post was reached. Strong hands thrust him upon a dry goods box preparatory to swinging him off to eternity. At this crucial moment, Judge J. B. Howell of the Keokuk Gate City, bareheaded and coatless, forced his way through the crowd, clambered into a wagon and appealed to the mob to listen to him. Judge Howell was popular, and loyal to the core, so the men stayed the lynching long enough to listen. Eloquenty and earnestly Judge Howell put his plea, and saved the life of Henry Dean. Never for an instant did Dean lose his nerve, and when he was told that he could go, he walked away as coolly and slowly as though nothing had happened.

At another time Dean himself was his saviour. The near lynching, instead of silencing had merely sharpened his tongue. Stung by the seditious remarks flung at them by the rebel orator, soldiers once again waylaid Dean on a dark side street in Keokuk. Possibly he was arrayed in his typical costume of flowing linen duster, brogans with shoe laces whipping about his ankles, pantaloons, and blue flannel shirt. Stoutly refusing to retract his remarks, Dean was dragged to a bluff overlooking the Mississippi. There was no trial. Just as the sergeant of the group was ready to give the orders to throw him into the river, the Reverend Dean held up his hand. Suspicious, the sergeant growled, "No oratory." But oratory was far from the doomed man's thoughts. Instead, he handed the sergeant a pocket knife and asked him to deliver it to Dean's son, a tow-haired lad of six, who would prize it. "Tomorrow", said Dean, "he'll ride his hobbyhorse up to the gate and wonder why his father doesn't come. Long has he wanted that knife to make himself kite sticks and pigeon boxes. We're poor, gentlemen, very poor, and I cannot buy him storemade toys."

He talked on for a few minutes, telling the soldiers of his wife, who had struggled through dark days with him. At last his voice died away. He stood there, silhouetted against the early evening sky, his face buried in his hands.

Only a crackle of dead leaves indicated the soldiers' departure. At last the Reverend Dean and a captain stood alone on the towering bluff. The captain, unmoved, said: "When you and Belzebub meet in the hereafter and argue for men's souls, my sympathies are all with the devil. You can go home now."

Lee County raised 15 companies from 1861 to 1864. The first companies from Iowa for the three-year enlistment, or duration of the war, were Keokuk companies. Many Lee County men also served in other states.



On October 2, 1929, a bronze tablet was placed in Victory Park, Keokuk, marking the site of the embarkation of troops to the South.

For years after the war the Estes House served the community as a hotel. The United States District Court was also housed there. In later years the G. A. R. used its rooms for their hall and the veterans assembled within the walls of the old hospital and fought over the stirring days of Rebellion. When the fifty-second encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic met in Keokuk in 1926, veterans in their parade saluted the former hospital with the old time fervor.

When the old Estes House was razed, its cornerstone found permanent resting place in the National Cemetery. On the bronze tablet which was placed on the glass enclosed cornerstone in Iowa's little Arlington were these words, approved by the Quartermaster General: "Cornerstone of the old Estes House, Fifth and Main, Keokuk, Iowa. Site of Army Hospital, April 1862-October 1, 1865. Erected to the memory of the soldiers who died in the old General Hospital at Keokuk and are buried in the National Cemetery."





## CHAPTER 10

### KEOKUK

Keokuk, the second oldest city in Iowa, was built on the high bluffs in the southernmost point of the State, at the meeting of the waters of the Des Moines and the Mississippi rivers, where, from the hills, three states could be viewed -- Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri.

The first white man to make permanent settlement on the "Point" was the Scotchman, Dr. Samuel C. Muir. In 1820 he built a little cabin for his Indian wife and their children on the bluff that was to become Keokuk.

Moses Stillwell and Mark Aldrich opened a trading post at the Point in 1829 for the American Fur Company, which, in 1831, constructed a block of five cabins to serve as their headquarters. This was later known as "Rat Row", a rambling one and two story structure made of round hewed logs, with a rude stairway mounting from the outside and a puncheon platform on three sides of the building that served as a steamboat landing.

Early in March, 1831, Isaac R. Campbell settled at the Point and during the following years he cleared and fenced over 20 acres of land on top of a hill on which he raised corn and potatoes. He sold this patch to Dr. Isaac Galland, agent of the New York Land Company, in the early part of 1837. Dr. Galland employed a surveyor named Brattle to make a survey of this plat, and to subdivide it into blocks, lots, streets, and alleys. The original plat is dated July 23, 1840.

Up to the year 1835 the settlement at the foot of the Rapids had been without a distinctive name. In the early days the Indians called the place "Puck-e-she-tuck," meaning "where the water runs fast," or "at the foot of the rapids." Voyagers and fur traders identified it as "The Point" or the "Farmers' Trading Post" until 1829 when the name "Keokuk" was first given to the village. In this year, on July Fourth, at a steamboat celebration of river captains detained while lightering over the rapids, Col. George Davenport proposed, and the measure was adopted, that the place be named for Chief Keokuk of the Sac tribe, whose home was about six miles up the river. Citizens of the village felt that this naming by outsiders was hardly legal and in September 1834 citizens of Keokuk christened the hamlet anew. In an article written in 1871 by J. B. Patterson, editor at that time of the Oquawka (Illinois) Spectator, an account is given of the event.



The second christening took place in a saloon, with a decanter of whiskey. It was early in September 1834, when a group of half-breeds and their agents met in a room in the old trading house in Rat Row to discuss the petitioning of Congress for the right to dispose of their titles in the Half-Breed Tract. After the serious business of the convention was over, the whole crowd adjourned to George Gaines' saloon in Rat Row for a "friendly dish of talk and something enlivening to wash it down."

As the afternoon wore on, plans for the future looked more rosy and the part the Indians had played in developing the country was more vividly realized. It was then that George Gaines stepped to the bar and called the meeting to order. In a few graphic phrases he told of the merits of his friend Chief Keokuk, who had been the "white man's friend" in the struggle between the two races for the ownership of the land. Gaines closed his speech by suggesting that "White man and Red man each honor the other by naming their town Keokuk." Whereupon he set out on the bar a decanter of whiskey and a pitcher of water, saying, "All persons in favor of Keokuk, please step forward and drink."

In a moment Esquire Isaac Campbell had jumped to his feet and, being a teetotaler, filled his glass with water. Gaines followed with whiskey, and did the other citizens, all drinking to Keokuk.

One citizen, J. B. Patterson, did not respond. He hesitated to vote partly because he had so lately come to the community, and partly because he did not like Keokuk. Upon urging, however, the one dissenter downed his "No" with water.

Thus was established the name for a settlement that consisted of one frame house (Mrs. Muir's) and ten log cabins.

Keokuk was incorporated under a special charter by a legislative act approved February 23, 1847. A census taken in the spring of the same year showed a population of 620, and 235 houses. The first election of city officers was held on Monday, the third day of January, 1848. Its government was of the mayor-council form until 1910, when it became one of the first cities in the country to adopt a commission type of government. In the late 1840's, and for many years following, Keokuk was the most important city in the State, a manufacturing and distributing headquarters for the pioneer Middle West. In the days when rivers constituted the main means of transportation, it was known as the Gate City, not only for Iowa but for the North and West as well because of its position at the head of unobstructed navigation from the south and at the foot of the rapids on the north.





Keokuk had to build big hotels for the transients coming in on the deepwater St. Louis packets, which could not go over the rapids. The Estes House, the Billings House, and the Deming House were erected to accommodate the many transients and visitors to the city.

The city's key position on the Mississippi in the early days of transportation made it a focal point for other modes of travel. One of the few completed plank roads in Iowa was laid between Keokuk and Birmingham, Van Buren County. Construction of the highway was started at Keokuk in 1852. Oak planks to the number of 712,800 feet were used atop a gravel-sand foundation. By 1865 the Plank Road was at the height of its popularity although its use continued for some years more. In 1871 a traveler noted that in a single day he counted as many as a hundred wagons going each way over the Plank Road. All of them paid toll because private enterprise owned the road, but in 1871 the county bought the thoroughfare for \$2,000 and it became a free highway. In the course of time the planks were torn up and sold for firewood, but the route was not abandoned and continued to be the principal highway into Keokuk from the northwest. In 1857 Lee County's "Poor House" was located on the Plank Road, about six miles north of Keokuk. It consisted of a row of log huts and one small frame house.

Keokuk's first railroad, the Keokuk, Mt. Pleasant and Muscatine Railroad, was started well before the Civil War, and was only 18 miles long. It was used for transferring freight from the St. Louis and Northern Line steamboats at Keokuk to Montrose, 12 miles up the Mississippi at the head of the rapids, to boats bound for up-river points. The Civil War halted construction on the road to Mt. Pleasant, but, the war once well over, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad swallowed the road's little beginning and extended the tracks through Fort Madison and on into Burlington.

The first passenger-carrying railroad out of Keokuk went into operation around 1866 or 1867; the exact date of its first run is uncertain. The road started as the K. Ft. D. M. and M. R. R., (Keokuk, Fort Des Moines and Minnesota Railroad) and followed the Des Moines River to Ottumwa. Not until 1868 did it reach Fort Des Moines, and its Minnesota goal was never even attempted. Several changes of name followed each other rather rapidly. When the road reached Fort Des Moines, the region was reflected in the railroad's new title of the Des Moines Valley Railroad. Keokuk, however, was aghast at the "omission of the only important part of the title," whereupon the name took a quick turnover and became the Des Moines and Keokuk Railroad. After years of operation under that title, the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway absorbed the road.



The third railroad into Keokuk was the old St. Louis, Keokuk and Northwestern, called the "FF" line. This branch became the property of the C. B. and Q. which extended it into St. Louis.

Keokuk's first engine was brought over from Quincy, Illinois in a barge. To honor one of Keokuk's prominent citizens, the engine was christened the J. K. Hornish. There were two other well known engines in the early days -- the St. Louis and the Montrose. The latter, in its old age, repaired and repainted, continued service under a new title -- the F. R. Sutton. These engines were woodburners, with huge smokestacks, and were kept painted a shiny black and hooded with a screen to prevent flying sparks. Something personal was lost from the railroads when the big C. B. & Q. and the C. R. I. & P. roads substituted numbers for names in designating the engines.

Keokuk's religious activity began June 25, 1673, when Father Marquette landed at the foot of Sandusky Creek, a few miles north of the site of Keokuk, and said prayers for the peaceful conversion of the Indians. Nearly a century and a half later, in 1817, when this section was under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of New Orleans, a Trappist priest, Father Joseph Mary Durand stopped off here on his way to Prairie du Chien. With the opening of the 1830's, other priests traveled up and down the river with brief stops at the newly named village of Keokuk. The first fully recorded acts of spiritual visitation in Iowa, however, are those of Father Van Quickenborne, on October 6 to 9, 1832. His diary shows that on those four days he baptized many in the faith and performed five marriages. He was followed by itinerant preachers of various faiths who, beginning about 1837, held services in Keokuk's notorious old "Rat Row" on the levee. From these pioneer beginnings sprang some of the State's outstanding churches. Keokuk saw several of Iowa's "first" churches started -- the Methodist Episcopal in 1841, the Unitarian on October 4, 1853, and a Jewish Synagogue on November 22, 1855. In 1941 Keokuk had 28 substantial churches, all in edifices of their own, many of them noted over a wide area for their architectural beauty.

The first schoolmaster in Keokuk was Jesse Creighton, a shoemaker. In 1832 he started a little school of eight pupils. He found ample time for teaching his pupils because the people did not cater to the shoemaker's trade, but went barefoot in summer and wore Indian moccasins in winter. Until 1852 the Keokuk schools were small, one-story frame buildings in which church services were held on Sundays. During this period an assortment of private schools for advanced instruction sprang up, prospered for a season, then died. Keokuk's school district was organized and the public school system started in March 1851. Two years later the





first high school of the town was erected at a cost of \$30,000. The building was an imposing structure for its period, with a tower and clock. In the succeeding years Keokuk built and outgrew numerous school buildings, experienced its period of separate schools for white and colored people, followed the trends in changing curriculum, and gradually created an educational standard that was recognized throughout the State. By 1941 it had six modern grade school buildings, a junior high school and a senior high school. The parochial schools number three: St. Vincent's grade school, St. Peter's accredited high school, and St. Mary's school. The Keokuk Business College developed a noteworthy clientele in the town.

Keokuk Medical College was the outgrowth of the "College of Physicians and Surgeons of the Upper Mississippi" that began a brief life in Davenport in 1849 after some years of stormy existence in various locations in Indiana and Illinois. The year 1850 saw the college renamed as the College of Physicians and Surgeons and removed to Keokuk, where it received recognition by the Board of Trustees of the University of Iowa as the medical department of the University. Not at any time, however, did this sponsorship by the University bear any financial obligations. The relationship continued for 20 years, until 1870, when the College of Medicine opened at Iowa City as an integral part of the University.

Keokuk College of Physicians and Surgeons led a noteworthy existence for years and graduated over 3,000 doctors and dentists. Twice rifts within the faculty resulted in the formation of another medical college at Keokuk. The first offshoot occurred in 1858, but existed for only two years. Thirty years later, in 1890, another split in the faculty brought into being the Keokuk Medical College. Both medical schools, however, were dependent for their funds upon local subscriptions -- a scanty soil that made existence for each institution so hazardous that by 1899 the colleges amalgamated under the title of the Keokuk Medical College, College of Physicians and Surgeons.

In 1900 a Nation-wide movement began which required of medical schools a more thorough laboratory instruction in better laboratories, under the direction of trained, salaried, fulltime instructors. A private college such as Keokuk's could not compete under these restrictions with the State supported institutions. Keokuk Medical College merged with Drake University in 1908. Five years later, for financial reasons, Drake's Medical College became absorbed by the University at Iowa City.



Keokuk's geographical location had a material influence on its legal and political development. Situated at the junction of two rivers, it was the head of navigation in early days with many land suits booked in its courts. Legal angles were complicated by territorial, Indian, maritime, national and international points of law, running back to the solving of problems involved in the Louisiana Purchase. The vagaries of the Des Moines River introduced tricky boundary questions for diplomatic settlement. As the capital of the Half-Breed Tract with its endless and intricate land trouble settlements, Keokuk was a versatile training ground in legal proficiency. Out of this confusing political background developed a legal standard and a legal ability that for years placed Keokuk lawyers at the top of the profession. With such an array of talent for a faculty, a law college at Keokuk seemed only logical. After a period of discussion, plans matured and the articles of incorporation for a Keokuk College of Law were filed in August 1882. The amount of capital stock was \$50,000 divided into shares of \$10 each.

Commodious quarters were assigned to the new college in the building of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which was located at the east corner of the intersection of Seventh and Blondeau streets, the site later occupied by the Masonic Temple.

The law school of Iowa's pioneer days functioned successfully for a number of years before it was discontinued. Its faculty was composed of eminent men among whom were Justice Samuel C. Miller of the United States Supreme Court, Judge J. M. Berk of the Iowa Supreme Court, George W. McCrary, United States Secretary of War, and an unusual number of national legislators.

During the Civil War two ferryboats crossed the river between Keokuk and Hamilton, the Gate City and the Hamilton Belle, running day and night. The Eagle, a small packet, made trips to Warsaw and Alexandria. These ferries were all of the side wheel type, to enable teams to walk through the boat, so that there was no need to turn the horses when driving off.

The ferry landing at Keokuk was at the foot of Main Street, which was macadamized with broken stones, but in wet weather it became muddy and slippery, making it hard for the transfer teams. Often four to six horses were required to a wagon.

A Keokuk man was largely instrumental in the adoption of the weather service by the United States Government. The method of foretelling weather facts on a scientific basis





and making them available to the public as a Government service was begun in 1866 by Dr. F. A. Kinnaman, who was then train dispatcher for the Des Moines Valley Railroad. Long before the Government had thought of such reports, Dr. Kinnaman had established a successful weather service along his line. His method was based on the movement of storms from the northwest.

Dr. Kinnaman wrote of his work to Gen. W. W. Belknap, a Keokuk man, who was at that time Secretary of War. This letter was primarily responsible for having the law passed by Congress authorizing the Secretary of War to provide for some recording of meteorological observations at military stations and other points in the interior of the continent.

The exact date of the coming to Keokuk of Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) is not known, but his brother Orion Clemens moved to Keokuk June 9, 1855, having bought a small printing plant then known as the Ben Franklin Book and Job Office. It was after this that Samuel Clemens came up from St. Louis for a visit, and Orion prevailed upon him to remain and assist him in the job printing work, agreeing to pay him \$5 a week and board.

This job printing shop was on the third floor of what later became 202 Main Street. The building was later taken over by the Iowa State Insurance Company, remodeled and made a part of its original office building, on the corner of Second and Main streets. When the building was remodeled, Mark Twain's room was completely restored, with type cases, pictures, and chairs, all reminiscent of the great humorist.

Mark Twain made the first city directory of Keokuk. A copy of the original edition, dated 1856, is preserved by the Keokuk Public Library. In the directory, as in everything he touched, Mark Twain left the mark of his humor, listing himself as an antiquarian. "Every town should have at least one," he said, "and Keokuk had none."

Another example of Mark Twain's early printing is a menu of the old Ivins House, the leading hotel in Keokuk in 1855-56. A copy of this menu was preserved by the Keokuk Public Library. In 1942, the Mark Twain Zephyr gave a daily reminder of the beloved writer.

The old Ivins House, now known as the Hawkeye Hotel, at the northwest corner of First and Johnson streets, became noted not only because it was Twain's regular boarding house, but because it was also the scene of his first after-dinner speech, made on the occasion of a banquet celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Benjamin Franklin. A report of the banquet appeared in the Keokuk Gate City of January 19, 1856.



Mark Twain's first paid articles, the Three Snoderass Letters, were printed in Keokuk in the Saturday Post.

The Keokuk City Library, unusual in its complete selection of the publications of the Smithsonian Institution, the State Historical Society, the U. S. Departments of War, Treasury, Weather, and other branches, the National and State House and Senate documents and records, opened for the first time on June 1, 1864. Through cooperation with the publishers of the Keokuk Daily Gate City and the Keokuk Citizen (weekly), the library maintained from the first a complete file of all newspapers published in Keokuk after 1850. The library purchased for \$350 the remarkable diary of Dr. Joshua Monroe Shaffer, prominent physician and naturalist, who came to Keokuk in 1872 at the age of 42 and lived there until his death in 1926. For 62½ years Dr. Shaffer kept a diary, an eight-volume chronicle, in precise handwritten entries, of the daily history of Keokuk.

Keokuk's first newspaper was the Iowa Morning Star and Keokuk Commercial Message published by Thomas Gregg in 1843. It was a six-column weekly appearing every Thursday morning. Within the year, however, its place was taken by the Iowa Argus and Lee County Commercial Advertiser, edited by Col. William Pattee. The first issue appeared in January 1846.

The Keokuk Register, edited and published by John W. and Robert B. Ogden, was the first newspaper in Keokuk to attain success. Its initial number was issued May 15, 1847, as a weekly.

The first daily newspaper in Iowa was the first daily in Keokuk -- the Keokuk Daily Whig, which developed from the Keokuk Register. It appeared as the Daily Whig on March 2, 1854, with James B. Howell as editor and publisher. At first the Daily was a five-column folio dependent for news upon river packets and the "pony express." It made little mention of local items. Within a year, however, the Daily Whig had changed its name to the Keokuk Gate City and started on its long career under that name as the most noted newspaper of southeastern Iowa. Perhaps its best known editor was Samuel Mercer Clark, whose brilliant and versatile editorials for 30 years won for him the title of "master stylist of the Iowa Press."

The Keokuk Citizen began publication October 27, 1922 under the editorship of its owner, Edward F. Carter. The paper appeared weekly and became widely known for its many historical articles.

The South Lee County Courthouse, at the corner of Fifth and Concert streets, was erected in 1856-57 by Dr. John F.





Sanford and was used as a medical college until 1859, when it was purchased by the county for \$9,000, about one-half the original cost. Few exterior changes were made as the years passed and it remained in service as the South Lee County Courthouse and jail.

From Keokuk in the 1860's the steamboat activities on the Des Moines River sprang into life, creating a whole new world of dreams and disappointments. For a few promising years the "doll size" steamboats made history in navigating the Des Moines across the State, but slowly the bitter truth was realized that the Des Moines bed filled too rapidly with sand for the stream to be navigable except at "high water." Year by year the boats making the journey were fewer until this enterprise, that had consumed thousands upon thousands of dollars in river improvements and boats, was only a memory. When in 1877 the great Mississippi canal opened the northern Mississippi to the traffic of large steamers, an era of increased prosperity as a river town began for Keokuk but a few years later the coming of the railroad changed the economic environment, bringing a gradual decline to Keokuk's supremacy as a river port. But in 1910-1913, when the great dam across the Mississippi replaced an older dam, the city renewed its importance as a river town. The development of hydro-electric power substantially increased its shipping facilities. The Government offices, the drydocks, and the lock added immeasurably to the employment and industrial life of the city. The fleets were outfitted and provisioned in Keokuk and maintained the nine-foot channel. Many Government boats made harbor in the forebay during the winter months. In the spring when river navigation opened, these boats were put into the Government drydocks for general repairs and many men were kept busy until the boats steamed out for service.

Many "first" commercial enterprises in the State began life in Keokuk; the first wholesale grocery house was S. Hamill and Company and the oldest drug and medical wholesale firm was the Wilkinson-Bartlett Company, founded in 1856. A wide range of manufacturing enterprises developed there, such as plants for various corn products, rolled oats, steel castings, calcium carbide, ferro-silicon, silver iron, and stock feed. In addition to the usual business of marketing and trading incidental to a farming region, Keokuk's natural resource of commercial fish meant an unfailing bulwark in industry with thousands of tons barreled, boxed, and shipped each year to Chicago, St. Louis, New York, and other markets. Keokuk had developed the largest black powder plant in the country by 1941 and became the second largest carbide manufacturing center in the country.



## CHAPTER 11

### FORT MADISON

The town of Fort Madison began its existence on the site of the old Fort, the first fort in Iowa. Here the great river turned toward the west so that the city, facing it, looked southward. To the north was Burlington. The greater part of Fort Madison was built on the bottom lands of the river, near the center of the big bend, but as the city grew it extended up the gently sloping plateau to the semi-circular range of high hills to the north. This site was one of the few locations along the upper Mississippi River which, without the aid of levees, remained free from inundation at all seasons of the year. Because of the land's gradual slope to the river and the series of divides between the ranges of bluffs, the drainage of the locality was naturally provided. Set within a frame of great bluffs and mighty river, the pretty little town came to be known as the Gem City.

In the autumn of 1808 Lt. Alpha Kingsley erected temporary quarters here for his soldiers. On March 4, 1809, James Madison was inaugurated President of the United States and the fort was named in his honor. It was first regularly occupied on April 14, 1809. But constant warfare with the Indians made evacuation of the fort necessary, and the soldiers set torches to it as they left. A few hours after the garrison's escape, all that remained of Fort Madison was the stone chimney above the smoking debris.

For nearly two decades the Indians prowled unchallenged about what they called "Po-to-wo-nok" -- the Place of Fire. White traders and trappers, however, viewing the ruins from their boats as they traveled up or down the Mississippi, identified the spot as "Lone Chimney." In 1908, the Jean Espy Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution erected a chimney monument on the site to celebrate the centennial of the fort's establishment.

The first man to break the long interval of desolation was a "mullein-leaf doctor," Peter Williams, who ventured across the river from Illinois in 1832 and built a cabin 500 feet below the gaping chimney. The land was not open for settlement for another year, and Williams was arrested and taken to Nauvoo, Illinois, by the soldiers from Fort Armstrong. When settlement on the land became legal, Williams returned to his claim and built another cabin.

General John H. Knepp, the next settler to come, was most instrumental in founding the city. On his way up the





Mississippi to Fort Snelling he learned from the steamboat captain that the site of Fort Madison was claimed by Augustus Horton, who lived on an island nearby. Knapp bought Horton's claim and built a cabin near the foot of Broadway and also established an Indian supply store. Later he sold his stock to Judge Cutler and returned to his family. In the spring of 1833 he came once more to his claim, accompanied by his cousin, Nathaniel. It was in this year that the United States acquired full rights to the Black Hawk Purchase, and other settlers hurried in and established claims.

In the fall of 1835 John and Nathaniel Knapp had Adolphus Allen, surveyor, define the boundaries of the town of Fort Madison: "Commencing at low water mark on the Mississippi River, due south of a red or Spanish oak tree standing on the bank of the river, and running due north one half mile; thence due south to low water mark on said river, by said low water mark, to the place of beginning."

Prospective settlers were coming in increasing numbers across the Mississippi. An almost continuous stream of horsedrawn caravans was moving through Indiana and Illinois. At Appanoose, Illinois, a point directly opposite Fort Madison, the covered wagons made temporary villages while the emigrants waited their turns at the ferry.

Anticipating the oncoming rush of settlers, the Knapps had erected two hotels -- John Knapp's Madison House, on the site of the old fort, with its kitchen adjoining the ruins of the stone chimney, and Washington House, owned by Nathaniel Knapp. Soon both were crowded to capacity. The town's first dance was held at Madison House on Christmas night, 1836. Madison House was the headquarters, in 1837, of Lt. Robert E. Lee during his Government survey of the Des Moines Rapids.

John Box had been appointed the first postmaster at Fort Madison when the office was established February 22, 1836. He was succeeded November 18, 1836, by James Douglass, who kept the mail in a pine shoe box at his home. A regular post route was covered by stage along the Mississippi from Burlington to Fort Madison, Montrose, and St. Francisville, approximately 45 miles round trip, twice weekly.

Many Indians still lived in the region and traded with the white men. Black Hawk made frequent excursions along the riverbank from his home in the timber nearby, but his appearance caused neither terror nor alarm. The war was over and he came as a friend. A welcome Fort Madison visitor at the old chieftain's lodge was John Carroll Walsh, senior member of the firm of Walsh & Pise, merchants, who



fell in love with Black Hawk's daughter Namequa and would have married her but for the interference of a friend from the East. Walsh, informed that he would probably be called "the squaw man from Baltimore," was persuaded to break the engagement and return to Maryland to live. Namequa married one of her tribesmen.

The Fourth of July, 1838, sixty-second anniversary of Independence Day, was the first one observed in the Territory of Iowa. The celebration began at day-break with the ringing of the bell in a new building owned by Jacob Cutler. The program of the day was held in the same building where an enthusiastic audience listened to the eloquence of two leading citizens, both lawyers. Henry Eno read the Declaration of Independence and Phillip Viele delivered the oration of the day.

A holiday dinner was served in an arbor at the shore of the Mississippi. Chief Black Hawk, in his best white man's mufti, was the guest of honor. Thirteen formal toasts were drunk, most of them with cold water, and rousing cheers broke out as glasses were lifted to "Iowa, this day taking its rank as a Territory. Soon may its star shine bright on the azure of our Nation's banner." Then James G. Edwards rose and proposed: "To our illustrious guest, Black Hawk -- may his declining years be as calm and serene as his previous life has been boisterous and full of warlike incidents. His attachment and present friendship to his white brethren fully entitle him to a seat of honor at our festive board."

Black Hawk rose and spoke gravely to these true friends.

"It has pleased the Great Spirit that I am here today. I have eaten with my white friends. The earth is our Mother; we are now on it, with the Great Spirit above us; it is good. A few winters ago, I was fighting against you. I did wrong, perhaps, but that is past; it is buried; let it be forgotten. Rock River was a beautiful country. I liked my towns and cornfields, and the homes of my people; I fought for it -- it is now yours; keep it as we did; it will produce you good crops. I thank the Great Spirit that I am now friendly with all my white brothers; we are here together; we are friends; it is His wish and mine; I thank you for your friendship. I was once a great warrior; I am now poor. Keokuk has been the cause of my present condition; but do not attach blame to him. I am now old; I have looked upon the Mississippi River; I have been a child; I love the great river; I have dwelt upon its banks from the time I was an infant; I look upon it now. I shake hands with you, and as it is my wish, I hope you are my friends. I may not see you again. Farewell."





And it was farewell. This was Black Hawk's last public appearance. At his home in Iowaville, Van Buren County, the great Indian succumbed to a brief illness and died on October 3, 1838.

The original platting of the town had within a few years become no longer valid and this brought an order by Act of Congress July 2, 1836 for a Government survey, which was acted upon in 1837. In 1842, the Iowa Territorial Legislature granted Fort Madison a city charter.

Fort Madison led an uneasy existence for years as a county seat besieged by rival claimants for the honor, but the courthouse was built for permanence at the very beginning of the battle. The Lee County courthouse was started in 1841, and completed in 1842. Georgian Colonial in style, it was built of brick with a large porch supported by stone Tuscan pillars. Its design was credited to Father Samuel Mazzuchelli, pioneer priest and architect. On March 29, 1911, the interior was destroyed by fire, which aroused discussion on whether to repair the old structure or to build a new courthouse, but sentiment for the oldest courthouse in Iowa prevailed and the building was repaired.

In 1838 the city had its first newspaper, the Fort Madison Patriot, published by James G. Edwards. Since the Burlington and Dubuque papers were Democratic, Edwards set up the Patriot as a Whig organ. He bought his press and type from Dr. Isaac Galland, who had published the Montrose Western Adventurer in 1837. The first issue appeared March 24, 1838. Although Edwards had made local history with the Patriot, he was not successful in paying his expenses. Despite tactful notices that the editor would welcome the settling of long due subscriptions, either in cash or in produce, too few responded. Although he was an elder in the Presbyterian Church and a landowner as well as the proprietor of the newspaper, Edwards made up his mind not to remain in the vicinity any longer. On September 1, 1838, he packed up his printing press, type and household goods and set out aboard a river boat for Burlington. There, in June 1839, he founded the Iowa Patriot, forerunner of the later Burlington Hawk-Eye, the paper that suggested the name "Hawkeye" for Iowa and Iowans.

The first newspaper founded in the city after the discontinuance of James G. Edwards's Patriot was the Fort Madison Courier, a weekly started by R. Wilson Albright July 24, 1841. After several changes of ownership, the paper became the Iowa Statesman in 1847, and somewhat later, the Plain Dealer.



Charles L. Morehouse issued the first number of the Fort Madison Democrat July 4, 1869. A year later he was bought out by W. P. Staub who, in turn, sold to Dr. Nelson C. Roberts and Henry L. Schroeder in January, 1874. After 1887 the Democrat, incorporated by the Democrat Publishing Company, was published as an afternoon daily, except Sundays. The weekly edition was continued until 1903. W. J. McGiffin and his associates purchased the company in 1919 and from that time issued The Evening Democrat as an independent paper.

Straight-laced New Englanders were among the leaders of Fort Madison's pioneer settlers, and almost from the beginning moral and religious activities prevailed. The town officials "out-blued" any New England Blue Laws in stern moral restrictions, a point of view that seemed strangely out of place in the usual loose living atmosphere of a Mississippi River town. The village lawmakers of Fort Madison, in the late 1830's and early 1840's, set their seal to a host of "must-nots." They made it illegal to "play at any game of ball" or "any game of quoits", to "pitch dollars or any other coin," to "discharge any firearms or pistols", "run a foot race on a wager", or to "keep open or admit any person into any shop, grocery or store for the purpose of trade within the limits of this corporation on the Sabbath day." The game of ninepins was prohibited as "productive of great waste of time", because it led to "habits of idleness and dissipation" and was "attended with great noise and disturbance."

On April 27, 1837, at the home of James G. Edwards, the Methodist circuit rider, Daniel G. Cartwright organized the Fort Madison Temperance Society with nearly 50 members.

The Methodist Church was introduced into Lee County during the winter of 1837-38 by the circuit rider Daniel G. Cartwright who covered the Fort Madison region, never missing an appointed meeting. The first Methodist Church built in Fort Madison was erected in 1841 on the Samuel Atlee property, during the pastorate of the Reverend P. C. Reynolds.

The Presbyterian Church was organized at Fort Madison March 26, 1838, when 17 persons met with a committee from Schuyler County, Illinois, Presbytery, in an upper room of an unfinished building on the river front.

The first Baptist Church of Fort Madison was organized in the home of Charles Brewster December 23, 1838, with 21 members. Judge Joseph M. Beck, prominent jurist, was among the sponsors.





The Episcopalian Church has had services at Fort Madison since 1847, when the Reverend William Leach began a three-year ministration in the Academy Building, but interest in the denomination had been manifested some years earlier. Mrs. Rachel Wilson Albright, granddaughter of the famous Betsy Ross, presented the church in her ninety-second year with a small silk copy of the first American flag, her own handiwork.

The German Protestants of Fort Madison banded together and established St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church on February 6, 1848. The Reverend Angelo held meetings in a room at 539 2nd Street, which was furnished, like all pioneer places of worship, with rough board benches and a plain table serving as altar and pulpit.

The first Roman Catholic services in Fort Madison are believed to have been conducted in a log cabin in May 1838 by Father August Brickweede of Quincy, Illinois, who also visited West Point and Sugar Creek. Lee County's first resident priest was the Reverend John G. Alleman, an Alsatian sent out from the Dominican Monastery at Somerset, Ohio. Father Alleman, who spoke four languages, acted as a missionary to the Winnebago Indians and also became friendly with some of the Sac and Fox, and with Chief Keokuk. On his arrival at Fort Madison in the summer of 1840 he said the mass in his private home. In the autumn he began construction of a church 16 by 18 feet in size of the first brick fashioned in Fort Madison. Serving the dual role of church and school, the building stood on a spot directly behind the site of the present St. Joseph's Church where in later years an exact duplicate of the pioneer structure was erected.

While Father Alleman shepherded his parish, he found time to introduce an interest in horticulture. Many vineyards in the district came from the nursery he grew beside the church. A trumpet vine which he planted blossomed and thrived uninterrupted through a century, and in 1940 was still admired for its heavy bloom. In an octagon-shaped grape arbor near his church, the good Father rested from his labors and received his parishioners. One day he hung there a bell presented to him by Capt. Pliny Alvord, master of the steamboat Osprey, who had taken it from its mounting on the craft formerly owned by Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet. Its mellow tones called Catholic Fort Madisonians to church and school, warned them of fires, heralded weddings and tolled at funerals until 1865, when it was removed for use as a school bell. Then it was installed in the tower of the newly erected St. Mary's Church (1871). In 1874 it was loaned to a parish in Hamburg, Fremont County, where it served for 40 years. In 1914 it was shipped back to Fort



Madison and was hung in the tallest spire in the city, St. Joseph's, and matched with two other bells that could harmonize with it.

During 1897, Daniel Tripp, S. Tripp, Frank Weld, and John R. Evans held meetings in Fort Madison which aroused much interest in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. Ten persons who were baptized joined the Montrose branch of the denomination. Later, as their growth warranted, they conducted their own services in Fort Madison. A permanent house of worship was dedicated in June 1912 to serve a membership enrollment of approximately 135.

The Fort Madison Christian Science organization dates from 1903, when 21 members began to meet in various homes. The group expanded steadily, and in 1924 when the Methodist Episcopalians built a new church, their former building was acquired by the Christian Scientists.

Other active religious organizations in Fort Madison were the Seventh Day Adventists, Church of God, Pentecostals, and three Negro churches: the Bethel Methodist Episcopal, the New Hope Methodist Episcopal, and the Second Baptist. The latter group was the oldest. It was formed in October 1873.

Fort Madison's school system began without even a building. In the early 1830's a Quakeress, Miss Jennings, is said to have taught a number of pupils. She was soon followed by a Mr. Rathburn, who was half white, a fourth Negro and a fourth Indian.

The next instructor was a Kentucky lawyer, Aldred Rich. Suffering from an unhappy love affair, he sought solace "out west" in Iowa. He immediately hung up his professional shingle, but Fort Madison furnished very little legal business in 1836 and 1837. He managed to earn a meager living by gathering a dozen children together and teaching them the "Three R's." Rich's career as an educator was cut short when a good law case turned up, and in 1839 he took his talents to the legislature.

During 1838 two "educated and capable" sisters from Boston, a Mrs. Williams and Miss Fanny Pond, had fixed up their front parlor and were carrying on in Fort Madison where lawyer Rich had left off. Somewhat more pretentious was the curriculum offered by Mrs. L. T. Clark at her newly opened Fort Madison Female Academy conducted in the residence of James G. Edwards, editor of the Fort Madison Patriot. Orthography was the first great principle of frontier teaching, and Webster's elementary spelling book was the bulwark of educational advance.





The Independent School District was established in Fort Madison in 1850. In general, such schools as were taught during the next few decades were held, not in "little red schoolhouses" but in the various churches. As late as 1885 Fort Madison had but one school building, of four rooms. Grandmother Brown's Hundred Years offers the following: "The children met for school in the basement of the Baptist and Methodist churches. But not long after we came a building was erected on Fifth Street, and Nelson Johnson, the superintendent, graded the pupils. Up to that time, mothers would bring their children and say they wanted them put in Miss So-and-So's room. One teacher taught all classes from the First Reader to the Philosophy Class."

Nelson Johnson in the mid-1870's founded the Fort Madison Business College which prospered through the years and in 1942 was giving commercial education to many young people of the vicinity.

The parochial school system at Fort Madison dates from the day in 1840 when Father J. G. Alleman first received pupils in his home. The supervision of various communities of nuns was inaugurated in 1859. The first of these were the Sisters of Notre Dame, followed by the Dominican Sisters in 1874. The Sisters of Humility took charge from 1885 to 1942 of three parochial schools and the Central Catholic High School.

Any history of the schools in Fort Madison would be incomplete without mention of the well known educator Mrs. Rebecca Pollard (1831-1917), who often visited in the city and spent the last ten years of her life there, at the home of her son, J. A. S. Pollard. Mrs. Pollard's Synthetic Method of Reading and Spelling was introduced locally in the 1880's. It quickly caught the attention of educational circles and was adopted in many schools throughout the Nation. Rebecca Harrington Smith had taught near Danville, Kentucky, before coming to Iowa where, in 1858, she married Oliver I. Taylor. Taylor purchased a newspaper, The Argus, at Burlington. After his death his widow resumed teaching at her former home in Farmington, and later married James Pollard, who in 1871, was named Superintendent of Schools of Lee County. Mrs. Pollard taught several private schools in and near Fort Madison; and under the pseudonym of Kate Harrington published poetry and fiction. Mark Twain once said that he remembered setting up some of her poems while working as a printer for his brother Orion Clemens in Keokuk.

While Iowa was still a territory and before the advent of railroads, steamboat traffic on the Mississippi was the principal means of transportation into and out of Fort



## Fort Madison

Madison. Steamboating grew into a proud and glamorous industry with mushroom rapidity, but the Des Moines Rapids at Keokuk seriously retarded Fort Madison's part in it.

Agitation toward voting aid to railroads resulted in a lively issue in 1853. By 1879 trains were moving over two lines connecting Fort Madison with points to the north and west. The Santa Fe Railroad and wagon bridge across the Mississippi, completed in 1887, made Fort Madison an eminent passenger and freight division west of the Mississippi and brought about an increase in population as well as a great advance in commercial and industrial activity.

No eastern border town of Iowa became better provided with transportation and shipping facilities than Fort Madison. It developed into the division point on the main line of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe, which gave it direct connection with Chicago and all points north and east of the city.

Industry within the limits of Fort Madison began with the erection of a horse mill by Gen. John H. Knapp for the grinding of corn and buckwheat in the summer of 1834. The mill was a primitive affair and was the only mill of any kind in the county until the year of 1845, when a newcomer, Walter Hawxhurst, erected the first steam flouring mill.

Not until 1851 was there any further development in local industrial activities. In this year a firm named the McConn and Parmer Milling Company erected a fine flouring mill on the site of the old fort.

The great lumber business, still known as the S. & J. C. Atlee Company, had its beginning in the year 1852. It grew to be one of the most extensive and best known lumber firms along the Mississippi River and possessed one of the few sawmills in operation outside of the logging country.

The American Fork and Hoe Company owed its start to a concern known as Winterbotham and Jones, who began making steel and wood products with convict labor in 1854. The prison labor contracts were abandoned in 1902 and a modern fireproof factory was built outside the walls of the prison. This developed until it became the establishment nationally known for its "True Temper" quality products.

The mercantile side of Fort Madison was largely the outgrowth and development of infant industries which sprang into being after the coming of the railroads. One of the newer, most widely known, and largest in Fort Madison, the W. A. Sheaffer Pen Company, started in a back room of the





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Sheaffer Jewellery Store in 1912. After careful years of experimentation Sheaffer placed a pen and pencil on the market that revolutionized the industry. The high quality of Sheaffer workmanship and service made the W. A. Sheaffer Pen Company the largest pen and pencil plant in the world, which position it retained in 1942.

Law violators are often the first to enter any new territory, and in this respect Iowa proved no exception. As a consequence, the First Territorial Legislature (1839) took action to provide for a place of confinement for criminals. Fort Madison was chosen as the desired site, largely because of its natural advantages. The people of Fort Madison presented a "suitable spot" of ten acres within a mile of the public square, as required by law, in the east end of town and about 400 yards from the river, on a low ridge extending to the base of the cliff. Excellent building material was available and the water supply abundant.

Amos Ladd of Burlington, who had been appointed to superintend the construction June 5, 1839, immediately began the erection of a two-story stone dwelling to be used by the warden. Plans were drawn for a cell house with 138 individual cells. The labor of quarrying, cutting, and laying stone was to be done by the prisoners. By November 1, 1839, the basement story of the warden's house and the guard room had been built, the foundation for 60 cells was begun and 350 feet of stone was cut for the cells.

Edwin Guthrie, who was appointed warden in 1841, substituted solitary confinement for physical punishment and caused religious services to be held every other Sunday. He employed some of the prisoners in the making and repairing of shoes and garments, and in the preparation of food. He also established a cooper shop, products of which were sold to the outside public. By the spring of 1843, he had completed the walls of the large main building and had these roofed over. By the end of the year, his program of building and employing the convicts had the approval of the governor and the sanction of the assembly.

In 1846 violent methods of punishment were entirely abandoned. Saturday afternoons were devoted to washing and reading. Each inmate was provided with a Bible; Sunday was set aside for Bible study and religious services. A library was established and maintained by a 25 cent charge to visitors.

Manufacturing was started at the penitentiary in 1846, when the legislature let a five-year contract to W. Cohick, in the form of a lease on the prison.



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The contract system of labor was inaugurated at Fort Madison in 1853. Under this plan, prisoners were leased to be worked by private enterprise in shops within prison property. The contractor actually fed, clothed, and disciplined the convict, in addition to regulating his labor and selling his product. Prisoners at Fort Madison manufactured, among other things, wagons, buggies, harness, saddles, mechanical and agricultural implements.

Education of the prisoners was undertaken in 1869. The years since 1869 were devoted to remodeling and constructing buildings and providing better working and living conditions for the prisoners.

While manufacturers contracted for prison labor, there was considerable exploitation of the convicts up until 1915. The issue was bitterly contested for years, reaching its climax about 1910. The legislature abolished the system after an investigating committee had reported that it was an "unjustifiable form of slavery", and provided instead for the establishment of prison industry under three classes:

1. Manufacturing plants to replace prison labor contracts, and equipped for doing a commercial business. The chair and furniture plant was established by the Board of Control under this group.

2. Departments not equipped for commercial business, the produce to be used by the inmates. The shoe industry, tailor shop, brush and broom factory, and the knitting mills belong to this classification.

3. Institution farms, the produce going to the prison's support.

The three systems of employing prisoners were named State account, piece-price contract for output, and employment for state institution use.

Extensive recreational and social opportunities were gradually introduced. Prisoners with good behavior records became eligible for yard privileges, membership in athletic teams, and participation in baseball, volley ball, football, tennis, wrestling and other forms of sport. They were permitted the use of the yard in the evenings and for various contests staged with outside teams. Athletic contests were frequently open to the public. The prison established its own band and orchestra, also a monthly newspaper, The Presidio.

Begun in 1839, the Iowa State Penitentiary grew up over a long period of years. It stands on a narrow ridge ending





## Fort Madison

at the base of a high cliff in the northeast part of Fort Madison. A range of bluffs forms the background in the shape of a horseshoe. The building was constructed of brown buff sandstone blocks, the walls and cell blocks rising 20 feet from the foot of the most northerly bluff. Official residences and administration buildings line the south wall. Travelers on highway, railroad, and river can always see the State's great prison etched boldly against the sky.



## CHAPTER 12

### AGAIN THE RIVER

Green Bay is a long narrow bayou in the southern part of Green Bay Township. It extends for about four miles and is the remnant of an old river bed, lying along the Mississippi River, into which it emptied. Its name arose from the abundance of green algae and various plants growing in its water. The lands surrounding the bayou were called Green Bay Bottoms.

The land bordering the river was low and marshy and parts of the interior were always too sandy for heavy cultivation. The early settlers of this region of the low lands or "bottoms" were subject to attacks of chills and malaria fever. With the draining of the swamps, however, this handicap was removed, and gradually settlers, aware of the fertility of the alluvial deposits from high water stages which had through the ages made these bottom lands the garden spot of Iowa, began buying up large tracts. Private levees were thrown up to protect much of this land from inundation during the freshet season, and this region became the greatest farm producing section in Lee County, if not in the State. Much of the bottoms was placed under cultivation, and through a judicious system of irrigation fine fields of corn and wheat, with large melon fields on the more sandy loam, made of this huge basin a verdant garden.

In the year 1901 the United States Government granted the Mississippi River Power Company a franchise to build a power dam at the foot of the Des Moines Rapids at Keokuk, with the provision that the company indemnify the land owners for any damages resulting from backed up waters caused by the dam.

To meet this requirement, the power company at the cost of more than a million dollars purchased all lands which its engineer found subject to overflow and backwater. With the coming of the dam in 1913 the water level rose and the low lands were flooded, while Green Bay proper became an arm of the main stream.

Then the district became interested in reclaiming the flooded land. Acting through the board of supervisors, it organized itself as a Levee and Drainage District with that purpose in view. With the establishment of this district, the power company resold most of the farm lands it had acquired, with liability for damage resulting from flood or backwater.





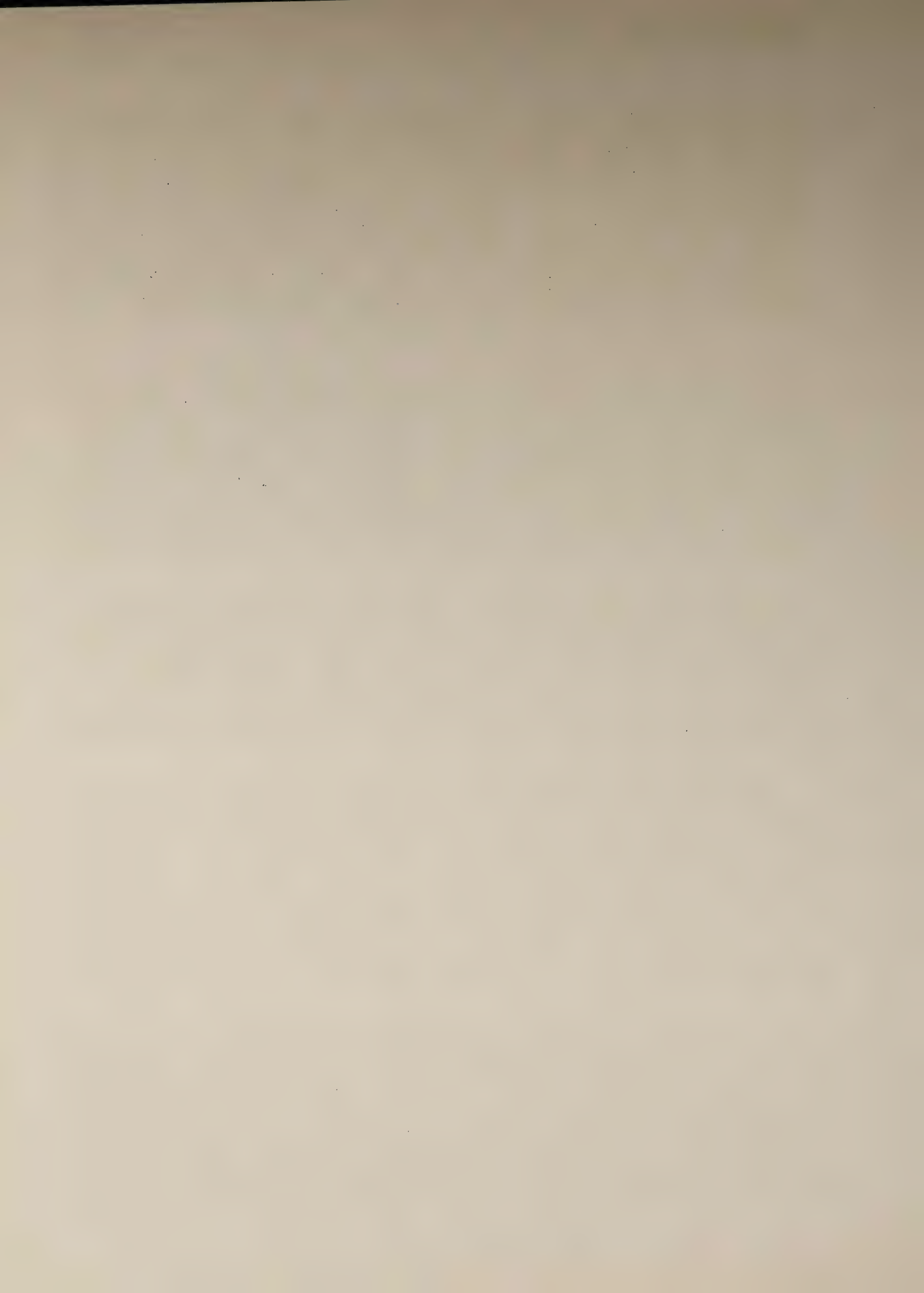
Levees were thrown around this rich tract extending from the highlands along Skunk River on the north to its junction with the Mississippi River, and along the Mississippi River beyond the lower point of Green Bay to what is commonly known as Lost Creek, from which the levee was extended northerly to the higher lands on the west of the basin. The lower lands, or Bottoms, a tract about 12 miles in length and from four to eight miles in width, became known as the Pumping District, because large pumps were installed to take off the surface water and all seepage and other surplus water that had flooded in.

The cost of building the levees, installing the pumps and digging drainage canals amounted to more than \$600,000, the bonds to be retired from assessments made against the lands within the district. The pumps were put into operation with power supplied by the Mississippi River Power Company, and the water was drained from the district, restoring it to its former state for cultivation. The farmers agreed to pay a maintenance tax in addition to the other assessment to keep the pumps in operation for high water and the constant seepage.

They were unable to pay this tax, however, because of the failure of crops during several bad years. Accordingly, in 1931 the pumps were shut down and the power company disconnected their lines. As a result, the water rising over and through the levees submerged the greater part of the low lands, and at times reached well within the area outside the pumping district, the tract normally so inundated consisting of approximately 8,800 acres.

In addition to this huge tract, areas in the Bottoms suffered inundation by the Skunk River, which easily overflowed its low banks. This stream, rising in the highlands of Lee County, flowed into the Green Bay district near the point formerly known as Jollyville, where its true channel disappears. Down the course of this river in rainy seasons the swollen waters from the uplands plunged heavily into the valley to release themselves over a large area of agricultural land outside the levees. Altogether, this periodic inundation included about 15,000 acres.

That these flooded bottoms with constantly new areas being periodically submerged should afford a rare feeding and breeding ground for fish and birds goes without saying. This large body of water, including the areas surrounding Skunk River and Lost Creek, became a widely known resort and resting place for migratory birds, and consequently one of the favorite hunting places of Iowa. Likewise, with the increase in the depth of the water within the levees the supply of game fish of many species vastly increased, while the



number of fish that made their way back of the levees to find spawning grounds in the marshy sloughs and swamps has grown yearly, until Green Bay Bottoms has become the paradise of anglers from all over the country.

To reach these happy hunting grounds, however, the sportsman found himself confronted with peculiar difficulties. The five public roads branching off from U. S. Highway No. 61 between Fort Madison and Wever and leading directly to the Bottoms made the area readily accessible in dry seasons. But with these roads submerged in time of flood, the only access to the region was by water. Motor boats, of course, made their way into the Bay district through the back waters of the Mississippi. Small boats were put in at the highway where the inundated area begins.

At this point the question of trespassing entered, with the landowners forbidding the passage of boats over their property. Several hunting and fishing clubs obtained leases to specified restricted areas within the Green Bay district. But many squatters, sportsmen, and unlicensed persons entered without permission the areas of privately owned property to establish themselves each year with blinds, camps, and hideouts to enjoy the ever growing hunting and fishing resources in the flooded area outside the State preserve of Green Bay proper, which years ago had been carefully prepared and stocked with fish by the State, for a State fishery.

In 1942 the property owners were still hopeful that their lands might be reclaimed and rehabilitated for agricultural purposes, and the district made attempts to persuade the Federal Government through the Dept. of Agriculture to aid in financing such a project. At the same time a large army of sportsmen became equally active in their efforts to induce the Government to acquire title to all the inundated areas and set them aside as game fish stocking ground, and a wild bird and game sanctuary. The matter received much consideration from the Biological Survey of the Department of Agriculture, but such a plan would be acceptable to the owners only on the basis of an adequate cash settlement for their property.

Thus this tract of land, perhaps the richest agricultural area in the State, and at the same time the best stocked quarry of fish and game, remained for years with its vast potentialities unrealized. A garden spot laid waste, Green Bay Bottoms neared the middle of the twentieth century as a sportsman's paradise whose gates are locked against invasion.





## Again the River

In 1939 William Lodwich of Chicago, owner of some 3,000 acres of the Bottom lands, renewed the pumping, and by the summer of 1941 had sowed some 260 acres to soy beans and buckwheat. If the attempt at reclamation were to succeed it would probably solve the question as to whether agriculture or sport is to claim this region.

Agitation for a railroad and vehicle bridge across the Mississippi at Keokuk had been a vital issue among the citizens of Keokuk since before the Civil War. It was not until December 6, 1868, however, that the contract was let to the Keystone Bridge Company of Pittsburgh at a bid of \$850,000. Work on the bridge was begun August 12, 1869, but was considerably delayed by wind and high water. The work continued throughout 1870 and into 1871.

On March 24, 1871, a short time before the bridge was completed, it was struck by a log raft which carried away the trestlework under one of the central spans. Again, on April 6, it was hit by a second raft, which struck the third pier from the Keokuk side, but no damage was done.

The last span of the new bridge was completed and in place on March 24, 1871, the installation of machinery on the draw span alone remaining to be done.

On March 29, with a big celebration on both sides of the river and on the bridge itself, amid the hoarse whistling of locomotives at the Des Moines Valley Railroad depot and the local ferryboat, the draw span was swung into integrated position. The railroad floor and track were still to be laid before a train crossing could be effected, however, and the date for this event was set by company officials for April 10.

The first rail crossing was made April 11, 1871. The equipment used was the locomotive "Iowa" and two coaches, the property of the Des Moines Valley Railroad. Jake Colter was the engineer. During the crossing the patent pivot center on the draw span broke into three pieces from the weight of the locomotive. The damage was not serious, but the span was rendered useless until a new casting could be made and installed. Three days later, on April 14, the new pivot center had been completed and the repair made. A locomotive crossed from Keokuk to Hamilton to test the new installation, and returned with a string of empty stock cars.

The bridge was now completed with the exception of a footpassage five feet wide to be built on the outside of the superstructure.



## Again the River

At the time of its completion the bridge had the longest draw span on the Mississippi River, 160 on the square and 376½ feet from center to center of piers. There were 13 piers in all, including the pivot pier, with an average height of 35 feet. The piers extended ten feet above the high water mark of the 1851 flood and were built on bedrock at a minimum depth of 50 feet below the base of the rails. the superstructure was 2,192 feet in length and 20 feet wide in the clear.

The most dramatic incident ever to be connected with the Keokuk-Hamilton bridge occurred November 4, 1881. Dusk had closed in heavily that afternoon in a great storm of wind and rain, and the steamer War Eagle was feeling her way down the river. She was caught by a cross current and dashed against the bridge. One side paddle wheel and the wheel house were torn away and C. E. Benning was tossed from the boat by the impact and lost his life in the water.

The terrific crash occurred at about seven o'clock and created a panic among the passengers aboard. The clanging fire bells and the hoarse bellowing of the War Eagle's whistle were mingled with the shrill whistles of other boats moored at the wharf. Half of Keokuk rushed to the riverbank to mill around in the wild excitement of the accident. For a few agonizing moments the War Eagle hung upon the pier, then she managed to float free and work her way to shore.

In September 1883 the packet company owning the War Eagle brought suit for \$50,000 against the bridge company, but failed to collect. The War Eagle was repaired, sailed the river for several years, and then burned at the St. Louis levee.

The bridge served for 41 years. Originally built to bear the weight of railroad equipment of earlier days, it became during the last half of its existence inadequate for the heavier types of railroad rolling stock.

Shortly before the great Keokuk dam was built the bridge came to be considered unsafe. It was then that the Inter-City Railroad Company was organized November 29, 1912, to secure the causeway of the new power dam for bridge use.

The fight for permission to use the dam for that purpose went to Congress, which gave its approval of the project. Opposition came from the owners of the Keokuk-Hamilton bridge. Andrew Carnegie, who owned controlling interest in the existing bridge, used his influence to fight the issue, but after inspection of the bridge, a congressional committee ordered the construction of a new one. The old bridge was remodeled into a modern, double-deck high





## Again the River

bridge by the Strobel Steel Construction Company, on the design of Ralph Modjeski of Chicago, a son of Madam Modjeska, the great opera singer.

The work began in April, 1915. The total cost of the new structure was about \$400,000. New approaches had to be laid to engage the proposed upper deck, which made the length of the whole structure, including the approaches, 3,500 feet.

The old draw span was opened for the last time in December 1915, and the work of dismantling got under way. The new span was completed and opened for the first time on Saturday, March 25, 1916.

Work continued during the summer of 1916, and the upper deck was opened for pedestrian and auto traffic August 17, 1916. The new structure was officially dedicated on Saturday, August 19, the ceremonies taking place on the upper deck where a large crowd from both sides of the river gathered to celebrate the gala day of this new opening.

The lower deck was not completed before the official dedication. About a month was required to lay the railroad floor and track and install electrical machinery for the draw span.



## CHAPTER 13

### THE KEOKUK DAM

The completion in 1913 of the great dam at Keokuk was the culmination of nearly a hundred years of dreams. The wild, unbroken, and all but unmanageable Mississippi had at last been harnessed. From 1836 to 1912 water power from the great river had been dreamed of and discussed, but never had it been developed.

The actual romance of the river began when Lt. Robert E. Lee, assigned to engineering duty in the Mississippi Valley, stood on the brink of the river above the village of Keokuk and dreamed of a future that would see the development of the natural resources of the entire Middle West through the huge volume of water. As a practical engineer, however, the young officer realized that the time had not arrived for the utilization of this power. Not until engineering science applied to hydraulics had increased the efficiency of the turbine, and electrical science applied to the dynamo and insulators had developed the power of the generator and advanced the radius of transmission of electric current could this dream become reality.

Early trials were made, however. Promoters appeared, raised hopes, and disappeared. Zebulon Parker, erratic, generous, inventive genius, deserted his farm and devoted the proceeds to his efforts to dam the Mississippi. In 1836 a party of eastern capitalists joined local men in a hopeless undertaking to harness the river. Then came Gates with his historic wing dam and flour mill on Waggoner's Point on the Illinois side, just above the present eastern abutment of the great dam.

In 1865, Keokuk itself began to take an interest in the job. Formerly Keokuk people had been sensibly pessimistic so far as investment of capital was concerned. Two Keokuk men in 1871 personally took upon themselves the expense of surveying the river directly across from Keokuk, but their undertaking brought no tangible results. All these dreams, however, had been based on the idea that the transmission of power could be secured only through huge shafting. Electrical power through the tremendous, untamed flow of water itself had not been imagined.

In 1893 the first hydro-electric plant was suggested. Immediately the idea took shape and interest flamed into a general enthusiasm, although the engineers of that day had nothing more in mind than a wing dam. Electric motors and high tension transmission lines were yet in their infancy.





## The Keokuk Dam

In 1896 prominent citizens of Keokuk and of Hamilton, Illinois organized a corporation -- the Keokuk and Hamilton Water Company -- to obtain the rights needed, to promote the project and to secure the engineer and funds to execute the enterprise. The city councils of Keokuk and Hamilton appropriated public money, by unanimous consent of the citizens, to this promoting corporation. The legislatures of Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri helped. Congress ordered a thorough investigation to safeguard the rights of the public.

The engineer found to handle the work and raise the money was Hugh Lincoln Cooper, pioneer hydraulic-electric engineer who later designed and supervised the construction of the Wilson dam at Muscle Shoals and the Dnieperstroy dam and power station in Russia.

Probably no person living in 1942 with the exception of the builder of the dam, knew all the details of that heart-breaking search for money. Every dollar of Cooper's own money was spent in the quest. His home in Stanford, Connecticut, which he had purchased for his wife and family, was mortgaged upon the insistence of Mrs. Cooper, who was heart and soul in her husband's project.

At last success came. When Cooper finally found money to finance the Keokuk dam, it was mainly from foreign shores. Englishmen seemed to have the greatest confidence in the ability of the American engineer. They had seen him drive a tunnel under the center of Horseshoe Falls at Niagara after he had built a number of great water power plants in foreign countries, among them Brazil, Mexico, and Jamaica. The total amount of capital showed that 65 per cent came from England, France, Canada, and Belgium, and 35 per cent from the United States.

Events developed rapidly during the seasons of 1910 and 1911. Low water in the river made the building of the cofferdams that preceded the actual laying of the concrete in the bed-rock of the river bed comparatively easy work. During the early spring of 1912, however, came the real test of the river's power and for two weeks the battle raged between the rising water and the construction the workmen had built. Following this danger, other perils threatened. Chief among them was the bombardment of huge ice jams against the cofferdams, the rise of water, and the high winds that brought violent wave action, threatening to undermine and wash out the crevasse in the cofferdams.

In the minds of every person who witnessed it, the breaking of the ice on the afternoon of March 24, 1912, was to remain a vivid picture. The ice in the river began to



## The Keokuk Dam

break at two o'clock. A winter of unusual severity and duration had given it an average thickness of 30 inches. Eight miles of it broke on this night, and it all had to pass through an opening of 450 feet between the cofferdams which were reaching out into the river from both the Iowa and the Illinois shores.

While hundreds of persons lined the riverbank and while Mr. Cooper and his assistants watched with anxious eyes for the opening attack, a large floe about a quarter mile square broke loose and floated down the river. The current carried it directly to the opening. The front edge buckled and piled up a solid wall of ice from the bottom of the river to a height of 35 feet above the water. Behind this came the entire mass of ice, but the cofferdams held. Huge cakes and blocks, weighing tons, each were hurled into the air as if by a giant hand. The constant booming as the gorge formed sounded like the thunder of heavy artillery. Gradually, however, the tremendous weight of ice and water behind the mass crumbled the gorge at its opening and soon huge portions of it were being forced through the gap, to sweep on down the river and make way for the rush to come.

That was the beginning of the trouble. In April the entire work was menaced by rising water. For two weeks a flood stage held. On April 7, with the water at 18 feet, and only a thin wall of earth, two feet wide, protecting the cofferdam space from being inundated, a severe storm came up about midnight. Waves dashed over the earth embankment, and the end seemed in sight. Cooper was there personally directing the fight. His men were holding the bank with sand bags. Fifty men were not enough. A call was sent for a hundred more and by morning the dangerous stretch of the cofferdam was covered by a mound of sand bags. The river then began to fall. The fight had been won.

The river was completely dammed and the water turned from its regular channel through the lower structure of the power house on March 15, 1913. After this the work became a task of carrying out the designs that had been drawn by the engineers in concrete and steel. However, it did not end the romance of the river.

Work of such mammoth proportions as that done in the river necessarily affected many people with property near by. There were 1,300 property owners above the dam where property was affected by back water. Of all of these, only a half dozen demanded prices for their land that were unreasonable and prohibitive. The stubborn attitude of these few compelled court action, and for the first time in American history, a private enterprise brought into play the law of eminent domain through condemnation proceedings. As a





result, a jury of farmers, versed in the values of Iowa land, returned a verdict in every case for the company.

With the backing up of the water, the entire topography of the Mississippi Valley for miles above the dam was changed. Hundreds of small islands were inundated. A few little villages and settlements were wiped out forever. All the timber suitable for firewood and domestic use was donated to whomever wished it. About half of the town areas of Montrose, Sandusky, and Galland were purchased by the company and this portion of all three was submerged. At Montrose it was necessary to move a cemetery. Fort Madison was practically forced to rebuild its sewer system. The Chicago Burlington, and Quincy tracks on the Iowa side of the river had to be elevated for a distance of 14 miles.

All obstacles were overcome and the last bucket of cement was deposited on the last day of May, 1913. The huge locks, themselves monolithic structures of solid concrete build upon the bedrock of the river, and larger than those of Panama, were opened for the first time on June 12, with the simultaneous passage of two of the largest boats on the Mississippi. The current sold to the St. Louis Public Utilities Company years before by Mr. Cooper, when he was bending every effort to interest capital, was delivered to that company on the night of June 30. In the meantime, a high tension transmission line had been erected 144 miles in length, to carry that current to St. Louis.

For four days starting August 25, 1913, the official dedication of the completed work took place. Governors Clarke of Iowa, Dunne of Illinois, and Lieutenant Pointer of Missouri assisted in the celebration that marked the event.

The dam proper is of the gravity type; that is, its shape is such that it withstands all pressure upon it by virtue of its bulk, without bracing or consideration of any provisions for taking care of stresses and strains. The dam structure is composed of 119 spans and is nine-tenths of a mile in length, extending across the Mississippi from Keokuk to the Illinois town of Hamilton. On its top are two standard gauge railroad tracks. The power house, 177 feet in height, or about that of a ten story building, can hold on its floor, without crowding, as many persons as the entire population of the State of Wyoming. Enough power is generated to illuminate a thoroughfare with ordinary 60 watt lamps, placed 100 feet apart, from San Francisco to the most northeasterly point in Maine. Linear measurement of the concrete work, including dam, power house, ice fender, lock, drydock, and sea wall, covers two and one-half miles.



## CHAPTER 14

### LAKE KEOKUK

Lake Keokuk, the large body of water held in check by the Keokuk dam, and extending up the Mississippi River to the city of Burlington, was originally named Lake Cooper, in honor of Hugh L. Cooper, the engineer who designed and constructed the dam. Soon after the dam was opened, however, the United States War Department vetoed the use of the name "Lake Cooper" because of the established rule not to name a government undertaking for a living person. Lake Keokuk was suggested instead, and Lake Keokuk it officially became.

The erection of the dam and Government locks created a great pool of backwater which was essential for the establishment of a sufficient head of water to operate the high powered turbines and to provide adequate navigation depth. Lake Keokuk backed over an area of 100 square miles and extended 65 miles north above the power dam at Keokuk. In width the lake inundated from three-fourths of a mile to an expanse of three miles.

The making of this pool required the condemning of 25,000 acres of productive farm land and the removal to other locations of steam power plants, factories, several ice houses, dwellings, and numerous other kinds of property. About 50 miles of wagon roads had to be constructed on higher levels. Railroad tracks were moved and rebuilt. Approximately 5,000 acres of timber and brush were cleared and burned to improve navigation in the lake. A lake shore scenic highway on the Iowa side was macadamized for its entire length from Keokuk to Fort Madison.

Changing the level of the Mississippi submerged several historic points in North Lee County. Foremost among these was the huge boulder known as Mechanic's Rock, on which the steamboat Mechanic was wrecked in 1830. This rock was situated at the head of the Des Moines Rapids, near the Iowa shore. Before the building of the dam it stood above the surface in times of low water and was one of the landmarks used by pilots on the Mississippi. When it was covered with water, boats could take the open channel without danger.

Lemoliese, the French trader who made a home in 1820 where Sandusky was later built, was buried near the bank of the Mississippi. The waters of Lake Keokuk covered his grave.





## Lake Keokuk

The old canal with its three locks, constructed by the United States Government between 1867-1877, to improve navigation through the Des Moines Rapids, was likewise submerged. The cost of the canal had run into millions, but with the creation of Lake Keokuk it was buried from view.

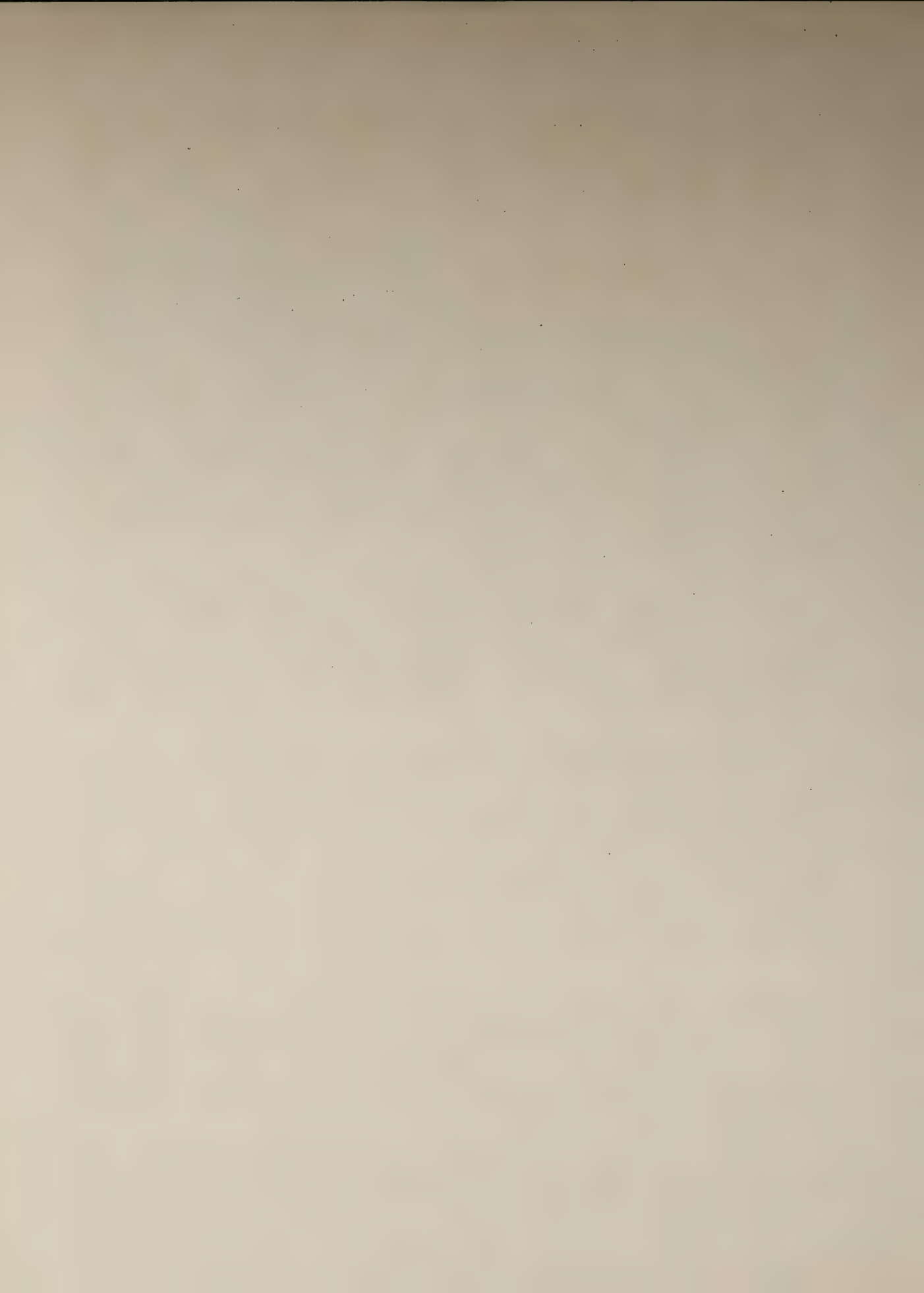
The lake was perhaps the greatest single improvement ever made in the Mississippi, except possibly the jetties at its mouth. It afforded deep water navigation with little current for 65 miles, permitting steamboats to gain two hours time between the Keokuk landing and up-river points as compared with previous conditions. The rising of Lake Keokuk formed the only really deep water in the Mississippi, deep enough to carry vessels capable of going on through the Panama Canal without breaking cargo. The great difficulty about river terminals on the Mississippi was that a dock might be out in deep water this week and a hundred feet or more inland the following week. The dam made possible the building of terminal docks on the lake, at one fixed height above the water, with great advantage to loading and unloading steamboats by power cranes.

The first and most conspicuous result of the new lake was the awakened interest in motor boating. Shortly after the official opening of the lake in 1913, the sixth annual regatta of the Mississippi Valley Power Boat Association was held at Keokuk. Permanent amphitheatre seats were built on the river bluff just below Rand Park, but well within the city limits.

Sailing, hitherto discouragingly difficult anywhere on the river because of the swift current, and entirely impossible at Keokuk because of the rapids, sprang into immediate popularity. Then came a boom in sculling, once pursued at Burlington under difficulties, but now revived there and also taken up with enthusiasm at Keokuk and Fort Madison. Rowboats, canoes, and outboard planes and skiffs were suddenly everywhere. Areas of the river where formerly canoeing was not to be thought of except for a downstream journey were now as easy and pleasant as on any large lake.

The recreational activities continued and increased. On July 4, 1936 Lake Keokuk was the scene of a sculling regatta with half a hundred sculls entered. The prizes offered on the occasion came from the Keokuk American Legion, which sponsored the event. Entries in the races were from Chicago, St. Louis, and other cities, with over ten thousand spectators enjoying the program.

Another happy development following the creation of Lake Keokuk was the increase in the use of its shore lines. Boathouses, ice houses, bath houses, and summer cottages



dotted its many miles of shore on both sides of the lake. Its curving, undulating shore line brought out innumerable spots on bluffs and lowlands that afford beautiful views of the majestic river.

On their flights north and south ducks and geese sought out Lake Keokuk for a restful half-way stopping place between the Gulf and the northern breeding grounds. Federal game laws prohibited the shooting of game birds from watercraft of any kind, and the birds thrived under this protection. Good hunting in season, however, prevailed in the adjacent sloughs and backwaters, and the creating of Lake Keokuk increased the number of such locations. Since the waters were so deep, and free from the usual boiling current of the Mississippi, the lake provided a perfect year-round home for the large mouth black bass and the wall-eyed pike, as well as a fair home for the small mouth black bass. The overflowed timberlands dotted with tree stumps, snags, and brush, furnished ideal feeding grounds for them. For a number of years the Federal Government, Iowa and Illinois have been stocking Lake Keokuk with black bass. Some of the best fishing will be found at the mouths of various creeks emptying into the lake and into their various reaches because bass prefer these waters.

The story of Lee County was permeated by two great influences -- the Indian, and the Mississippi River. The struggle by the whites for supremacy over the Indians began with the erection of old Fort Madison and continued until the strife broke out finally in the fateful council between Black Hawk and Keokuk, which resulted in the Black Hawk War. For nearly a century land titles in Lee County were snarled by the legal tangles arising from ownership in the Half-Breed Tract. Black Hawk and Keokuk, Lee's two great Indians, were commemorated in various ways in the county. Black Hawk Heights, above Fort Madison, was named for the time when Black Hawk kept vigil over the activities of his white enemies; Keokuk the city took the name of the "peace chief" to honor the Indian who made the white man's course his own. But Indian influence was a thing of the past, while the power of the mighty river remained a living force. Towns were made and broken by the great waterway. Keokuk was a gateway to prosperity in the 1880's when a thousand steamboats a year touched her levees. Then the railroads thinned the river traffic to a trickle and the towns along that highway were eclipsed. In those dim days an old river cook was wont to bake a pan of biscuits each year to toss into the river as his boat passed Keokuk, in memory of all river cooks who were dead. Then, after the building of the great dam in 1913, the river again came alive and once more brought prosperity to Lee County.





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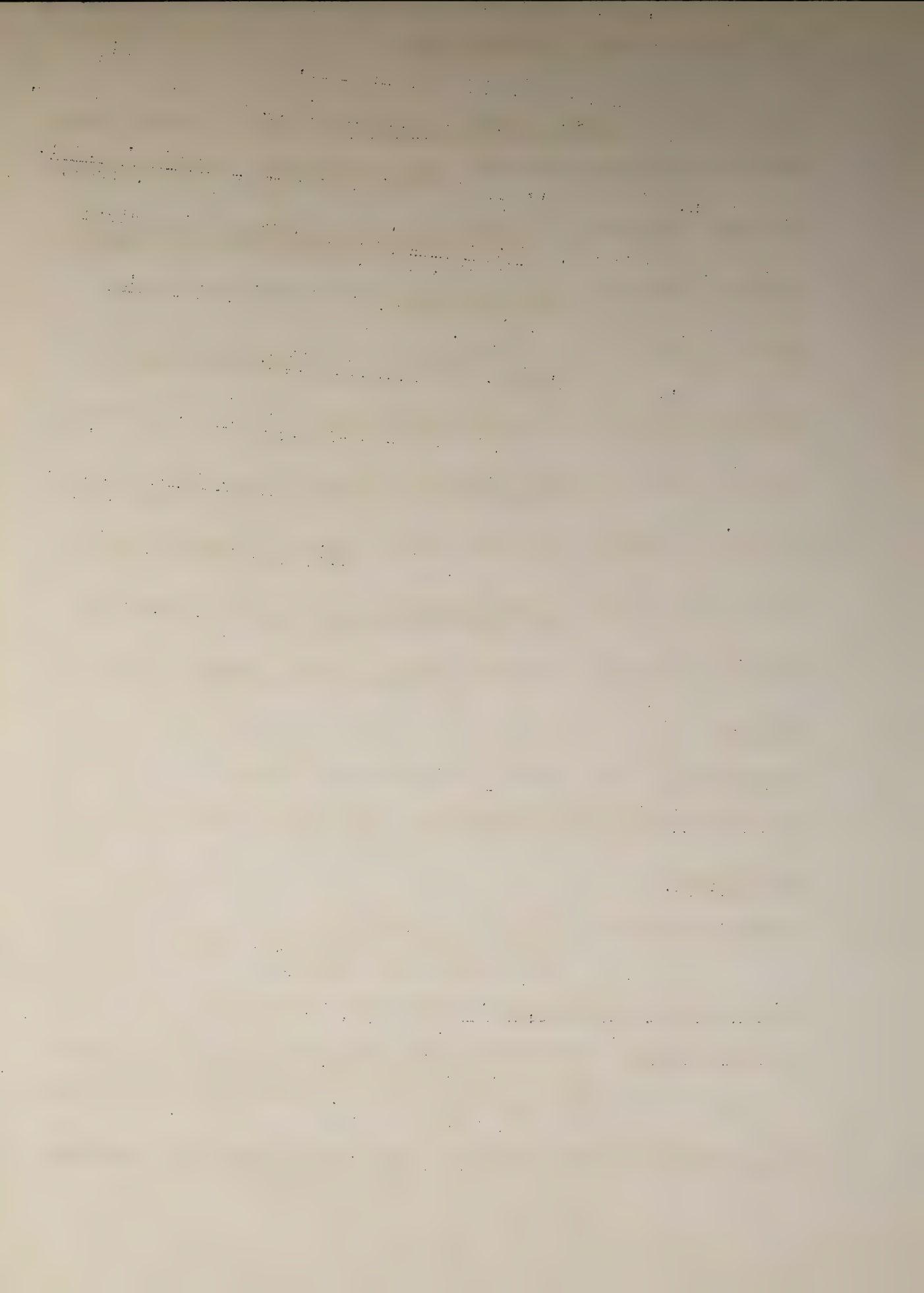
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